THE BVILDERS OF FLORENCE

by J. C Wood-Brown

Illystralions by Herbert Railton

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THE BUILDERS OF FLORENCE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE DOMINICAN CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA AT FLORENCE

ITALIAN ARCHITECTURE

FORMS OF THE TUSCAN ARCH

ETC., ETC.

Towers of the Gherardini, Baldovinetti and Acciaiuoli from the Sala della Niobe - Uffizi Gallery

THE BUILDERS OF FLORENCE

BY

J. WOOD BROWN, M.A.

63801

WITH SEVENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY

HERBERT RAILTON

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N.B.—All these illustrations if not otherwise described are from drawings by Herbert Railton.

PREFACE

THE title of the following work may serve to make clear to the reader from the very first—clear from cover to cover—that the pretensions of the book it names are of the most limited kind. Florence itself is a subject far too vast for this canvas, not to say a word of how it must transcend that very moderate knowledge, scant time, and ordinary ability, which are all that the author has been able to employ in this direction. Let the reader distinctly understand then that he is not to expect from the following pages anything other than what they profess to supply. Here are but some notions, more or less ordered, touching the complexity of the city's life at certain chief points, so as, perhaps, to make that complexity somewhat more intelligible than at first sight it would seem to be, or tending to relate that life, in visible and comprehensible sort, to what has ever been its chief vehicle of contemporary and permanent expression, the Florentine building Art.

This seems the fitting place to add what should certainly be said regarding the architectural part of the book, which, as it stands, and without preface, might be justly blamed as lacking in coherence, while yet the reader has not appreciated a reason for this *staccato* treatment of the subject which has made it almost necessary and therefore almost excusable. The author's general plan engaged him to group his thoughts in chapters, each devoted to some prominent Florentine building, so that his work, if written in Italian, might well have been called "Firenze studiata nei suoi Monumenti." This granted him, it follows of course that the double interest of each building, architectural and historical, clearly called for a subdivision within the chapters themselves, and for an arrangement that should find space, side by side, for the craft and story of each monument in its order. But then, what order? Here lay the *crux*. Should the buildings be handled

according to the ages when Florence saw them rise, or in another sequence, that of the historic incidents with which they are chiefly connected? On the whole, as sacrifice there must be, it seemed better to prefer the historic to the architectural order, the wider to the narrower story. On these lines, then, the book has been built, and if, inevitably, the architectural student find the treatment of his subject here a somewhat desultory one, he may perhaps admit that there has been a certain excuse, other than carelessness or indifference, for its adoption.

It has been said already that this book has no pretension to completeness, and a glance at the table of contents will show that from among the many important and monumental buildings of Florence few indeed—only twelve—have been chosen for treatment here. Be it so, the critic will say, but if few, yet why these few? Why go afield to Settimo and neglect the Badia of Florence? Why speak of Santa Maria Novella and find no word for Santa Croce? The reader, who sees his favourite church or palace thus passed by, is asked to believe at least that an underlying reason and no mere caprice has dictated the choice of which he complains. History and architecture, let him remember, are the twin determinants here, and that not separately but together, inwoven in this book as they surely are in fact and in life. But so, it will be understood how choice has been at once limited and directed, fixed on certain buildings as possessing both architectural and historic interest, and such as lend themselves readily as illustrations of the city's life, whether commercial, ideal, or political. And, even in Florence, such buildings are not innumerable.

His purpose thus cleared and defined, with some of the consequences to which it has led in the minor yet important matters of selection and arrangement, the author, as he commits his work to the press, takes this welcome occasion to thank all those private and public persons and authorities whose kind help has assisted and encouraged its appearance.

FLORENCE, 29 *March*, 1906

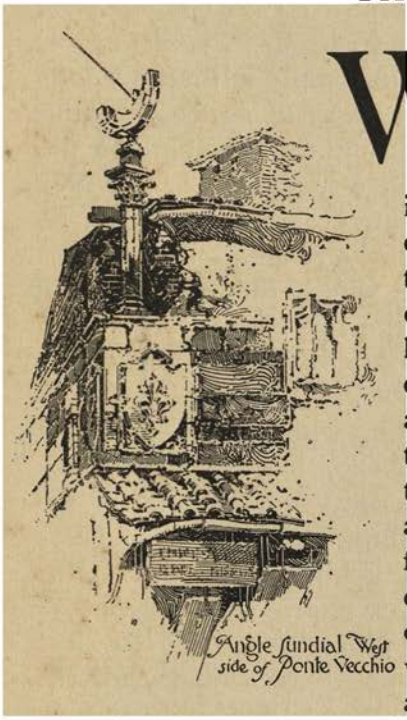
THE BUILDERS OF FLORENCE

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I

THE SUBSTANCE


Angle Sundial West side of Ponte Vecchio

WE grow every day more familiar with the fact that men bring their destinies with them into the world, and that at least the larger lines of individual life are shaped by long antecedent conditions. Now this is true of the group and the community as well as of the single life. Cities then, as the homes of such communities, have their destinies from which it is hard to fancy any escape, and, if we have wit to hear them, the fates of Florence speak from the folded hills to which she looks. Ere a stone was laid in her foundations, her future rise and fall lay bound in the sands of Arno, which cannot choose but move or rest at the bidding of the waters which have brought them where they are. Exactly in what sense Florence owes her first being and original character to the Arno it should not be difficult to discover. At Cortona in the Val di Chiana, or Certaldo in the Val d'Elsa, to mention only Tuscan examples, the

coming of the railroad has brought about a noteworthy change and development. In each case the ancient town remains as before on its hill, but under it, in the valley, and close beside the railway station, there has grown up a suburb—so to call it—where the new life and movement finds its home, and which bids fair to end by being the more important place of the two. So Florence came from Fiesole at the call of the Arno; she is the creature of the stream by which she lives, and her original character—however strangely it may sound to those who know her only under modern conditions—is that of a trading community.

Is it possible, one may ask, that the Arno ever was, to the valley in which it flows, what the railway is to the Val d'Elsa or the Val di Chiana? To have a fair waterway to and from the sea, we seek the service of a stream not a torrent: and the Arno is a torrent, wayward and uncertain; now filling all its banks with the floods of spring, anon sleeping amid its sands in summer, again sweeping these sands before it when the rains of autumn are rushing to the sea. But it is necessary to remember that the Arno is not now what it once was. Let it be granted that, ere history began, its sands and those of the Serchio had nearly reached the present coast-line, filling up that gulf of the sea where the group of the Pisan hills once stood free as an island, like the Monte Argentario at Orbetello. Allow that natural forces, either of sudden earthquake or slow erosion, had removed the mysterious and legendary rock of the Golfolina at Signa, so that the lake, which once laid and covered the level of the middle Val d'Arno, had drained away down the course of the stream, leaving only marsh-lands in the deeper depressions of the Florentine plain. Below, then, all was much as we see it now, but above, in the hills that look on the Arno, and from which its waters come, a change has passed of which we must certainly take account. Now these hills are bare—peak and breast and long detritus slope—bare and dry for the most part, even in winter, for the snow falls on them only to melt at once, so sun-smitten are they, and there is no rest for the rain there, till it find and form the river of to-day, wayward and inconstant. But when history began, and even as late as the Middle

Ages, these hills were covered with thick woods, with what influence on the Arno it is not difficult to see. The rainfall was almost certainly greater in these days than it now is, and the evaporation from soil in shade much less; and the mosses and bogs of these vast woods, holding back the melting snow and falling rain, acted as river governors that helped to maintain a much higher and more constant water level in the Arno than we see to-day.

Plausible conjecture alone would lead us to such a conclusion, but, in the case of the Arno and of Florence, such conjecture is confirmed by actual history. Tacitus in his *Annals*, writing of the year A.D. 15, mentions that Florence then sent a deputation to Tiberius praying that the Tiber should not be relieved at the expense of the Arno by turning the current of the Chiana into the latter stream at Arezzo—*ne ipsis perniciem adferret*—lest they should suffer damage thereby. Evidently the state of the river was then satisfactory, no more water was needed, and the prosperity of Florence was so bound up with the condition of the Arno that any change in the river was regarded as a matter of the gravest consequence.

It might indeed be said that what the Florentines feared was a flood, and that such fear is no proof that the river was all-important to them as a means of communication with the sea. To clear this point written history again comes to our help, offering two early inscriptions which testify to the actual existence of such traffic. One of these, built into the fabric of the ancient Baptistery, may still be seen and read by any visitor who cares to seek it in its strange resting-place, under an arch of the first gallery. It dates from the second century A.D., and tells us that in these days there was at Florence a college or guild of wood-merchants called the Ostian College, obviously because it was in business relations with another at the mouth of the Tiber. Already, then, the axe-blows were ringing in the Casentino, already the long rafts building at Florence, whence the river carried them to the sea and to Rome, already the work was begun which, not of necessity but in sheer extravagance of felling, has changed the face of the country and made it difficult for us to conceive of the Arno as a navigable stream.

Nor was this use confined to timber rafts; the Arno served Florence as the vehicle of varied and growing commerce. For the second inscription which has reached us from Roman times, speaking as it does of the *Curator Kalendarii Florentinorum* at Pisa, shows that their merchants were already numerous in the city by the sea, where they had a regular corporation and exchange, a register of moneys and of interest. The boats that still ply on the lower reaches of the river, lifting high their prow and stern like ancient galleys; the sails set fair for Pisa that still swell on the walls of her Campo-santo, where the masters of fresco painted them; alike derive from that more ancient past when their forms were first devised, and their capacity proved in the conduct of Florentine commerce. How far that early commerce extended who shall say? That Rome concurred in it through the port of Ostia we know; that it reached other coasts and islands we suspect; and many a suggestion offered by Florentine names, both of persons and things, puts it beyond serious question that this channel of trade was one of the bonds between Italy and Greece: the material reason then for the establishment of a Greek community in Florence with all its important consequences.

When we speak of early lines of traffic, the passage from the river to the road is easy, and it must be said that Florence owed much of its being and importance to a situation which commanded the latter as well as the former means of communication. Due north of the city, at a distance of some twenty miles, between the peaks of Monte Citerna and Monte di Fò, an easy pass opens in the main chain of the Apennines. Since Italy was first inhabited this must always have been used by men in their coming and going between the plains of Bologna and the valleys of the Arno, the Chiana and the Tiber; it determined the passage and course of the great middle road from North to South. Fiesole, whose origin is lost in the remote mists of early Etruscan time, must have had its first importance as a castle of observation, and perhaps of toll, set to command this road where it passes down the valley of the Mugnone.

And Florence, if she drew nearer to the river than the city

that gave her birth, did not forsake the road on that account, but rather held it in yet closer grasp just at the critical point where the passage of the Arno made boat or bridge a necessity. Ferry-boats there must have been here from the very first, and it is not, perhaps, a vain fancy which connects their Latin name of *cattae* with the ancient family of the Cattani, dwellers in Fiesole during the eighth century, and possibly descendants of those whose privilege it had been to command the ferry service and collect its toll.

Here we must realise that a road, such as the Romans built, with all the possibilities it opened in the way of rapid wheel traffic, was as great an innovation in its day as the railway has been in our own times. Very significant therefore, in our view of the rise and early importance of Florence, must be the passage of Livy, where, speaking of the third century B.C., and the work of the Consul Flaminius, he says : *viam a Bononia perduxit Arretium*,—he built the road all the way from Bologna to Arezzo. This, of course, was not the Flaminian Way proper ; *that* led almost straight from Rome to Rimini, where its office and traffic were taken up by the Æmilian, and so brought, by Bologna and Parma, to Turin and the Alps. The middle road, with which we are concerned, reached Bologna more directly by way of Chiusi, Arezzo and Florence ; it was called the Via Cassia, and sent a branch, under the name of the Via Clodia, westwards to Lucca, thus connecting with the Aurelian. An inscription of the year A.D. 119, preserved in the Opera del Duomo at Florence, says of the Emperor Hadrian : *viam Cassiam vetustate collabsam a Clusinorum finibus Florentiam perduxit milia passuum xxci*,—he built the Cassian Way, where age had broken it down, from the border of Chiusi all the way to Florence, being eighty-one miles. On the whole one sees that Florence was not a station so much as a junction on the northern road, with all the advantages which such a situation was sure to command.

As yet we have thought of river and road separately, now, for a moment, let us consider them in their relation to each other and to Florence. The nature of the country itself has determined a necessity under which the navigable course of the Arno begins almost

exactly where it is met by the road of which we have been speaking. North and south runs the road, to Lombardy on the one hand and Rome on the other; steadily westward flows the river to Pisa and the sea: mark then their crossing on the map, and under this sign, which not chance nor convention but God the World-builder Himself has set, you will find—Florence, sealed thereby as a city of commerce and prosperity so long as the old order shall last, while woods wave and water runs, and men know how to keep the crown of the causeway and handle the good gifts of God. So, by the road, and but a bow-shot from the river, Florence opens her heart in a great market-place, and just behind the Market her Christians, when their time is come, build, *ad Forum Vetus*, the Church of Santa Maria ΟΔΗΓΗΤΡΙΑ—notice the Greek dedication—St. Mary, the Guide of travellers and merchants, by land and river and sea. Restored for the last time, as it were in a vain hope, in 1577, when the commerce of Florence was already dead, this Church, after two centuries of neglect, was suppressed in 1785, and turned to the vilest use of which a building is capable. A hundred years later its shame and stones were swept away together in the great change of our time, which has given the city an empty square in place of the ancient Market, once its living heart. Which things are a sad parable, and we gladly turn to the days when that heart still beat true in Florence, when the pulse of her life was rising, and the sign that marked her seat by the Arno spoke not in vain, but with power to predict the coming centuries of her commercial power and prosperity.

Not that this progress held its way without a check even in early times. Languor set in at Florence under the reign of Diocletian, and in sympathy with the general decay then felt throughout the whole Western Empire. The corrupt fiscal system destroyed the middle class with the fall of its chief representatives, the Decuriones of the provincial towns, and now the trade of Florence must have been in decline. This then is the moment to lay one's finger on the pulse of the city's life. Dark days are coming, and the North road, hitherto a principal artery of her commerce, is about to beat with the fever of war and bring the enemy to the gates of Florence.

Mercato Vecchio

In 406 the stream of northern traffic falters, stays, and but slowly resumes its march ; like the fluttering play of a pulse which intermits when the heart is struck with sudden fear and needs time to recover strength and find its rhythm. Radagaisus and his Goths are on the way, moving southward with the long summer days. On the 23rd of August Stilicho surrounds them with a wall of steel where they lie behind Fiesole, and starves them to surrender. Florence breathes again, for the danger is past, and the first act of her restored self-possession is characteristic enough ; she sells these Gothic captives into slavery at twelve shillings a head.

The old world in great measure died when, four years later, Rome fell before the forces of Alaric. But the Gothic rule in Italy brought a change which was in many respects preferable to her condition under the dying Empire, and in the new security and prosperity Florence had her share. So the fifth century passed, and passing brought an Edict from Theodoric which is worth notice as an example of his enlightened legislation, the more that Florence had a special interest in what was enacted. "In the Mincio, the Oglio, the Ausere, the Tiber and the Arno," writes Theodoric to Avilfo his magistrate, "we learn that certain persons have set obstacles (*sepibus*) to the course of the stream and of the boats upon it. We would have thee act under orders from the honourable Abundantius, Pretorian Prefect, in using all means to put a stop to this, and to prevent anything of the kind being again attempted ; but let free water be left in the stream for the movement of river traffic." It is not difficult to see how important such traffic on the Arno must then have been, when a Royal Edict passed for its protection and encouragement.

Before the sixth century was old a new trouble broke the Gothic peace, and made itself felt in Tuscany. The troops of Witigis occupied that province for a while in 536, ere they marched south again to meet Belisarius at the Ponte Molle. Two years later the horrors of famine and pestilence were added to those of war. Men lived on acorns for bread, they grew lean with fever, they died in a black madness of disease like torches blown out by the wind. In 540 war was at the gates of Florence, when the Greek Captains

Cyprian and Justin attacked and reduced the Gothic garrison in Fiesole. Yet a few months, and, in 542, the events of 406 were repeated with far other consequence. Totila led his horde southward across the Apennines by that road so vital and fatal to Florence, where Radagaisus had passed a hundred years before. And now there was no Stilicho to oppose his march. The Greek captains, indeed, stood firm, the barbarians raised the siege of Florence and passed on to the southward, but, when the critical moment was past and the city opened her gates, it was only to allow the flight of her population. Fear drove the Florentines to Fiesole in the train of the departing garrison, or hope drew them to other centres where commerce could still be carried on; Florence had escaped destruction only to endure the extremity of desolation in an abandonment that must have lasted for many a long day and year.[1]

What are we to say of the ages that followed the sixth, save that they are dark, and leave us groping to discover signs that the times had changed at Florence and that her new development and prosperity were near? The first code of Lombard Laws was published in 643 by King Rothari; it contains three enactments providing for the safety of the roads and of travellers. This then was a government under which commercial centres, such as Florence had been, might hope for new life; the more too that, if we are to believe an important authority,[2] the Lombard rule favoured the crafts by comparison with the ownership of estates or life upon them, and so determined, during the seventh century, a movement of return from the country to the towns. If this movement had brought Florence, even in a hundred years, to any tolerable position in the province, this would account for the persistent tradition that she began to live again under Charlemagne, while leaving the great Emperor's credit in her prosperity still undetermined. There is reason to think that the convent of St. Andrea all' Arco, founded or remodelled in 852, had a considerable connection with this commercial revival, which, after the first millennium, had so firmly

[1] It is perhaps worth remembering that seven years later a like fate overtook Rome itself, where corn was sown within the walls, so that the city presented the appearance of "a little well-ordered and prosperous farm"!—Hodgkin, *Italy and her Invaders*, Vol. IV, p. 641, and Vol. VI, p. 588.

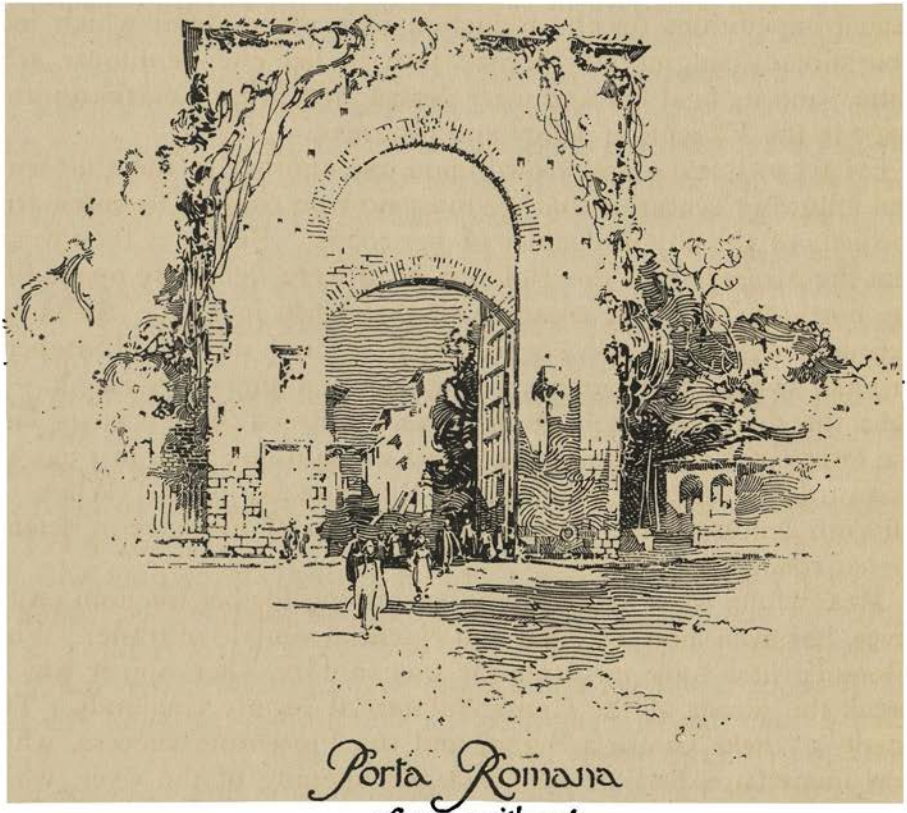
[2] Hodgkin, *Italy and her Invaders*, Vol. IV, p. 641, and Vol. VI, p. 588.

established itself that Florence was already a formidable rival of Lucca, then the capital of Tuscany, and as such was excluded by decree of the Emperor Henry IV in 1081 from trading in the markets of San Donnino and Capannori, lest she should injure his favourite town.

Thus, then, we arrive at the opening of the twelfth century, the time when a connected and authentic history of Florence may be considered to begin. The story of the period, and of succeeding ages, is very largely that of war; the sorrows of Florence are found on the stricken field, her triumphs lie in the oft-repeated success of her arms, and it might therefore seem as if this city, originally a commercial centre, had now strangely forsaken her native character and aims. Florence rose at the cross-roads, or rather at the meeting of road and river; rose to hold command of both. And what then if that command were threatened? Would not the very sign under which she was born seal her for war, commit her to a commercial *crusade*, that she might hold once more the peaceful power of river and of road? But this was just the case of Florence in the twelfth and succeeding centuries, embarrassed on every side by the local impediments to her trade that feudalism had set up. The story of her campaigns reveals a steady purpose, and one that was perfectly accordant with the character and destiny appointed by nature for this city. Had we nothing but this warlike chronicle to study, the true nature and life of Florence would yet stand clear, so purposeful is her march, so certain her plan of campaign, so unfaltering the hand she puts forth to grasp the liberty of river and of road.

Let us take the latter line of communication first. Since Roman days two additional roads had risen in importance. To the South, Florence reached towards Rome, not only by Arezzo, but by the valleys of the Ema and the Pesa: the way that passed under the walls of Siena, and that Siena often barred. To the North, she might not only gain Bologna by the old road of the Mugello, but, to the eastward, Faenza and Ravenna by way of Pontassieve and the valley of the Montone, the Tuscan Romagna. In 1110 the city had driven the Conti Alberti from their castles in the Val di

Pesa, and Fiesole fell before her arms in 1125. Four years later Florence held Vignale in the Val d'Elsa. Then in rapid succession she mastered Montebuoni (1135); Pontassieve (1141); Monte di Croce (1153); and two years later built the frontier castle of Poggibonsi to strengthen herself against Siena. After the fall of



Porta Romana
from without

Arezzo (1170) and Asciano (1174), Siena was brought to terms, and for a time the south roads were clear. But a new menace rose in the Val d'Elsa with the building of the mysterious and half-legendary castle of Semifonte on the hill of Petrognano. "Messer Pace da Certaldo," who, it seems, in this matter was Piero di Giulio della Rena of the seventeenth century, offers us his hand as

guide, and at once, by the gate his fancy built, or at least adorned, we pass into a city of old romance, with marbles strangely mixed among its defences of dark stone, and, over all, upon a tower of fabulous proportions, a mighty lion in sculpture that held the flagstaff of the place and looked toward Florence with changeless hate. The reality, however, was serious enough to challenge repeated expeditions for the reduction of a place about which men were already singing: "Firenze, fatti in là, 'chè Semifonte si fa Citta," and its final fall and utter destruction in 1202 marks another stage in the Florentine policy and progress.

Events so thicken and crowd upon one another in the thirteenth and following centuries that we must now be content to summarise the feats of the city in defence of her roads. Suffice it then to say that the Mugello and the Bologna road were definitely opened for the northern traffic by treaty with that town in 1203. Siena was defeated in 1235, a success to which the red day of Montaperto in 1260, so fatal to Florence, brought only a temporary check. In 1282 the road by Pistoia to Modena was freed; seven years later the forces of Arezzo were broken at Campaldino; and, in 1390, the eastward approach to Faenza and Ravenna lay open. When the fifteenth century dawned the long campaign of Florence in defence of her roads was done.

Meanwhile, what had the city been doing for her freedom on the river, her even more original and essential vehicle of trade? When Florence first took up arms—it was in 1108—her object was to break the power of the Conti Adimari at Monte Gualandi. This castle lay near Lastra a Signa, and the Florentine success, which was immediate, had for its effect the opening of the river, which the pretensions and tolls of the Conti, like another *Golfolina*, had long closed to profitable traffic. The like happened to the Conti Cadolinghi at Monte Cascioli, near Badia a Settimo, in 1113, and so vital did this freedom of the Arno seem to the Florentines, that though Rempoctus, the Vicar of the Empire, was here arrayed against them, they slew him on the field, and marched over his dead body to the liberty of movement which their trade demanded. In 1182 Empoli was subdued, and in 1204 Florence built her Castle

of Montelupo to protect the traffic she had won from the pretensions of the opposite Capraia. Her first notable success against Pisa dates from 1235. In 1284 the Pisan fleet was destroyed by Genoa in the sea-fight at the Meloria. Florence now formed a league with Genoa and Lucca, and thus gained from her great rival the towns of Fucecchio, Santa Maria a Monte, Santa Croce, and Monte Calvoli, which greatly enforced her grasp on the lower reaches of the Arno. Already, in 1254, she had threatened to turn the position of Pisa by opening a port of her own at the Monte Argentario of Orbetello, and this menace procured from Pisa a treaty by which the trade of Florence passed, free of tax, down the Arno to the sea. In 1348 the same tactics were repeated, Pisa again exacting her toll, and Florence securing its remission by the threat that she would open Porto Talamone, and send her goods *viâ* the Maremma. All need for such policy ceased when Pisa fell in 1406, and Florence became, not only supreme on the Arno, but a mistress of sea power as well, with a fleet of galleys at her command. This fleet, be it observed, was neither a superfluous luxury nor the vehicle of a trade with distant ports which Florence now for the first time attempted. The third Crusade, lasting from 1189 to 1192, had enrolled many Florentines and opened the eyes of the city, always keen to extend her commercial relations, on the South and East. In 1193 she had a house of merchants at Messina, one of whom was very possibly that Buonarota of the Parish of Santa Maria Novella who, in 1197, gave evidence before the Courts concerning matters which had happened "after his return from Sicily." In 1311 a Dominican of the same Church, Fra Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, returned from the East to write his remarkable "Itinerary," which, as he was familiar with the Arabic language, and had gone as far as Bagdad, must have been a treasure of information for the Florentine traders in the Levant and beyond.[1] The common route, however, lay farther to the North, and, crossing the Black Sea, reached the mouth of the Don, where, in the city of Tanis, the merchants of Florence met and dealt with the traders of farthest Asia.

[1] Arch. di Stato, cart. di S. M. Novella, sub anno. M.S. of the Bibl. Laurenziana.

The fleet, organised after the fall of Pisa, not only consolidated and protected a commerce already formed, but gave occasion to several developments which must not pass without notice. *Consoli di Mare* were appointed in 1422, and received a charge to place others in all ports of commercial consequence. Venice even, which had hitherto kept Egypt as a close preserve, was now obliged to yield in these regions before the advance of Florence, who built a Fondacco in Alexandria. Mechanics, Navigation, Astronomy, Geometry, Geography and Languages of necessity received a powerful impulse, and the fruits of these studies were seen in Toscanella and in Vespucci, whose name became that of the new Continent discovered in 1492. Not in sheer abuse, nor altogether in vain, had the revenues of the Pisan University been in part appropriated to the maintenance of the Florentine fleet. Great gains in pure knowledge were the result, and, when the commercial prosperity of Florence passed with the dying century, she might still claim a proud position as having been the chief seat of those aspirations, and that theoretic and practical wisdom, which gave the human mind a new direction, and enriched the world with another Continent.

So then, Florence was, substantially and from the first, a commercial town. To this conclusion our study has already brought us, but, as yet, we have said nothing of the manner of her trade or the goods in which she dealt. To this, then, as indeed the substance of the substance, we must now devote some attention. When, at the close of the Classic period in Italy, the northern nations made that country their spoil, they opened the way to their own manufactures, for trade ever follows the flag, and so it early came about that woollen cloths, woven in France, Flanders, and perhaps Germany, found a new market in Italy. These were the stuffs *D'Ipro, o di Camo, o di Cabragio*, the products of Ypres, Caen, and Cambrai, which the chronicler Giovanni Villani mentions as having been the common wear in Florence before 1260. As imported, they were *grossi*, that is thick, heavy, and rough cloth, liked by the Italians because the quality of the material was excellent, and the texture full and firm. Nothing could be better

for warmth or wear, but the Italian taste had already been formed on the exquisitely light, soft and bright fabrics of the Levant, and to that taste these French cloths still left much to be desired. Might they not be improved and made to take something of the surface and colour of the lovely Eastern stuffs without losing their own more substantial qualities? This, then, was what was done at Florence. As Villani remembered them, these cloths had already become what he calls *grosso scarlatto* and *grosso verde*, that is they were foreign stuffs of full texture which Florence had dyed and dressed to her own taste.

Where did the city learn this Art? The Barbarian inroads of the fifth and sixth centuries had laid Tuscany waste, but they had not entirely broken, as how should they, the classic art-tradition of the Scholæ, in many at least of its technical processes and products. A writer of the late eleventh or early twelfth century—Theophilus, author of the *Schedula diversarum Artium*—promises in the preface to his work that the reader shall learn "whatever Tuscany knows in Mosaic work or variety of Enamel." Now Theophilus was, it seems, a German monk, and, however little direct light the passage we have quoted may throw on dyeing or cloth-dressing, it is at least enough to show that, in the eleventh century, the fame of Tuscany as a home of delicate Art had already passed the Alps. But there is much more to our immediate purpose in the *Schedula*. The recipes it contains correspond in a wonderful way, as Berthelot has well shown, with those of a much earlier authority, the *Compositiones ad Tingenda* of the Lucca Cathedral Library, written in the eighth century by an Italian scribe. Thus we are brought to recognise in this latter MS. the authentic source and manual of that practice in the Arts which had brought Tuscany the fame it evidently enjoyed in the days of Theophilus. To these *Compositiones*, then, we turn with the greatest interest, and not in vain, for among many recipes for alchemical processes and for the gilding and colouring of glass for mosaics—which latter were what Theophilus chiefly valued and quoted—we find others exactly to our purpose. Here, for instance, is one example: "Shells are found in every sea, but chiefly at the Island and in the Lakes.

This shell has blood in a certain part, blood of a purple red, wherewith purple dye is made, thus: take the shell, and boil it with the fish and sea-salt, and put it in a vessel, and it is fit for use. To dye purple: take alum of Alexandria, powder it . . . and pour on boiling water, stir up and let it settle . . . strain and . . . dip what you would dye. Leave it two days, then stir &c." Here we have dye, mordant and process very exactly described. It is to be noted, too, that, as Muratori has pointed out, in the recipe "De Crisorantista" we find what is simply a clumsy transcription in Italian letters from an undoubtedly Greek original. This, then, agrees with the mention of the Tyrian Murex, the alum of Alexandria, and many another suggestion of the *Compositiones*, to assure us that these processes were originally Eastern, and that they came to Tuscany through some Greek source. Now Florence, we know, had a Greek colony in her midst from early times, and there can be little doubt that it was in the *technique* these strangers had brought that, when the days that broke her under the Barbarians were past, she found again the secret of her new commerce and continued life. For when the *torselli*, or bales of Northern cloth, reached Tuscany, such merchandise was not only dyed and dressed for home consumption, but, a taste for these fine goods springing up in the countries whence the raw material had come, trade began to set in the contrary direction, and Florence to supply France, Germany, and England with what they hardly recognised as the produce of their own looms, so much had it gained from the Art practised on the banks of Arno. If Muratori is right in saying that *Amphimalus* derives from the Greek, and means a stuff high in pile on both sides, then the sense of the famous Calimala, the premier Guild of Florence, can hardly be doubtful; it must mean the art of dressing piled woollens so as to make them things of new lustre and beauty. But Calimala was the name given to the earliest, the original Art of the city, and confesses therefore at once its true nature and the Eastern source from which its processes were derived. Now historic documents assure us that the Art of the Calimala was already come to power and prestige in Florence as early as the year 1150, while in 1182 its officials were thought not unworthy to

act, upon occasion, as, by substitution, the recognised officers of the civic State.

Meanwhile, as was natural, another Art, closely allied to the Calimala, had already developed from it. At least as early as the twelfth century the Florentines had come to ask themselves whether the commercial situation might not be turned to their greater advantage. Why should they depend on northern looms? Why import from such a distance the raw material of their principal manufacture, instead of producing it at home? If wool could only be grown in Tuscany to equal the foreign article, or at least woven there with the craft of Ypres and of Bruges, Calimala would pay less for its material, and Florence be the richer by the establishment of a new manufacture. The Arte della Lana then, concerned with the production of woollen stuffs for the Calimala, was already on foot before the year 1200, and, in 1239, received its great impulse from the arrival of the *Umiliati*, or, more properly, the Fratres Humiliati S. Michaelis de Alexandria.[1] This Religious Brotherhood had learnt the secrets of northern looms in Germany itself. In 1251 they were already settled in a convent of their own at Florence, with fulling mills at work by the banks of Arno. In 1308 the *Arte* had no less than three hundred workshops in the city, producing annually about one hundred thousand pieces of cloth. These the Calimala dressed, and, in greater part, exported from its twenty warehouses; so well did the sister-arts work into each other's hands, and so great had the commerce of Florence become.

It is significant that the oldest specimen of writing in the modern language of Florence, and of Dante, has been preserved in the form of a fragment from a book of accounts. Thus it reads: "M.CC.XI. Aldobrandino, Pietro e Buonessegnia Falkoni no dino dare katunu in tuto libre lij—they owe us, each and all, fifty-two lire—ke demmo loro—which we gave them—e dino pagare tredici di anzi kalende luglio—and they ought to pay thirteen days before the Kalends of July—se piu stanno, a iiij denari libre il mese quando fusse nostra volontade—but if they delay, at the rate of

[1] Alessandria in Piedmont.

fourpence per lira a month when we please to exact it." One sees that, as was natural in a commercial community, the business of the money-lender, at a sound 20 per cent, was already understood and practised at Florence.

But, indeed, such a matter went deeper and wider than this extract would of itself lead us to understand. The money business of Florence may well have begun in such a simple way as the needs of one merchant, and the capital gathered by his more fortunate neighbour must, from the first, have suggested, for so it has always been in all lands and ages. But the Arte del Cambio, properly so called, arose when it was realised what facilities the wool trade offered to all who had need to make payments within the limits—already wide and ever growing wider—where the Eagle and the Lamb, the twin Arts of the Calimala and Lana, conducted their operations. For the first time, at least in modern history, men now saw how the movement of a great and genuine commerce had power to transfer and adjust obligations between distant debtors and creditors, whether such obligations had arisen through this commerce itself or in some other way. As the Arno itself, which not only waters the land through which it flows, but bears vessels on its bosom, and carries them to distant ports, so the Florentine commerce, besides its immediate advantages in the accumulation of wealth, served as the vehicle of its distribution. Money thus became a commodity, to be bought and sold with advantage, and so, on the foundation of the wool trade and its movements, arose a third Florentine Art, that of the Cambio, or exchange of money. As early as 1233 Florence already held the money affairs of the Roman Curia—to which large sums were constantly passing from abroad—in her hands, profiting exceedingly by these transactions, which tended to grow larger and more lucrative as time went on. Nor were the subtle Florentines content to realise that money might be dealt in like wool; their keen business aptitude is best seen in this, that they perceived the advantage waiting their Cambio were it to become a Calimala of *specie*, were it, that is, to treat gold as the Mother Art of Florence had treated cloth, furnishing the world with a coinage of such

refined superiority as might command all markets. This they did in 1252, striking their first *fiorini* of fine gold, with the lily of Florence on the one side and her Patron St. John on the other. These were the pieces of which Villani tells that they went everywhere through the world, and even drew the notice of the Moorish king of Tunis, bringing no little honour and profit to the Art of the Cambio, and to the city where they were struck.

It is subtleties like these which at once advance an enterprise and open the way by which decay enters in. We shall not probably err much in seeing a fatal meaning for Florence in the transference of the Papal Court to Avignon during the fourteenth century (1309-1377). For the chief business of the Cambio, as has been explained, lay in the forwarding of Papal revenue, and, at the root of the so-called Babylonish Captivity of the Curia, there was a secret understanding with France, to which, naturally, most of that business would then be transferred. Gone were the days of Gregory X (1273), when, in company with the magnificent Baldwin II of Constantinople, the Pope lodged in Florence in the houses of the Mozzi, his bankers there. The Acciaiuoli, who were still sending Hungarian money to Avignon in 1337, failed in 1346, as the company of the Bardi and Peruzzi had already done four years earlier; it was said because of the unpaid debts of the English king Edward III, to whom they had furnished the immense sum of one million three hundred and sixty-five florins, for the war with France. One sees, beneath all this, the jealousy which the money-market of Florence had roused in the neighbouring country, and the reason why it was chosen as the first point of reprisal.

The weakening of the Cambio, though probably temporary, must have told upon the twin Arts of the Calimala and Lana, from which it sprang, and with which it had so close a connection. But these were to sink under a succession and combination of circumstances which affected them much more directly and fatally. To save expense of carriage, the Arte della Lana set up factories abroad in the countries which had hitherto sent wool to Florence and received her finished products. This proved a fatal step, for the northern nations learned how to work wool up to the Florentine

Porta Romana
from within

standard, and henceforth kept this great industry in their own hands. It is true that Florence still had a great market for her cloths in the South and East, for the Doge Tommaso Mocenigo reports that in his time (1420) Venice took sixteen thousand pieces of Florentine stuffs every year, for export to the island of Sicily, and the ports of the Levant and Greece. But heavier blows were in store than had yet befallen the city of the Arno. In 1453 Constantinople fell to the Turks, who soon overran Greece, and destroyed the flourishing towns that had supported Eastern commerce. In 1492 America was discovered, and the great westward movement begun, from which Florence could hope for no profit, save indeed the barren honour of having helped to originate it. Her Art of Silk, which came to its height and power in the fifteenth century as that of wool declined, enabled her, it is true, to hold, for some ages more, a precarious place in the markets of the North, from which her woollen goods had been driven; but the sheen and rich colour of these new brocades were too like the glory seen in the sky, and on the clouds, when day is nearly done. So sank Florentine commerce in a splendid sunset when the hour was come.

For nations and cities, like men, have their day, which no human art can much prolong. The life of the individual sinks, in weakness and death, when his frame can no longer resist, as it once did, the strain of the environment, with its continual menace to life. In the State and city, where life is constantly renewed as one generation succeeds another, fate falls from a different quarter. It appears when the people, strong, it may even be, as their fathers, have to face altered circumstances, uncontrollable, and yet stronger than they. So fell Florence, as Tyre had fallen before, when the world she knew, and had ruled so long, lay in ruins about her.

CHAPTER II

THE SPIRIT

Shrine from E. Wall of Corte degli Alberighi

IT were manifest absurdity to stay upon a review of Florentine commerce, in the conclusion that this city held nothing but a nation of traders and shopkeepers. The Florentines were the *quintessence* of Italy, said Pope Boniface IX; the fifth element or vital spirit in the Italian character. Such a judgment, to have passed current as it did, must have embodied widespread opinion, and therefore have contained no little measure of the truth. Here then is a new and worthy inquiry before us in the nature and fortunes of this delicate Spirit of the place.

Nor let it seem for a moment as if, in quitting the history of the city's commerce for research in this region, we were leaving firm ground of fact for an ocean or a sky of troubled and nebulous conjecture. Not so, for the trade of Florence did not more inevitably result from her local position and advantages, than her Spirit may be seen to do from another order of facts indeed, but facts that are not less palpable and substantial: those of the racial history and characteristics of her people. The change we make then is not from realities to dreams, but from geography to ethnology; the human background that surely determines a nation's ideal and, through that creature of the national spirit, its history.

In Florence this background was surely what we may call in a large sense the Classical—that is, the native Italian, trained by

force of Roman forms and directed by grace of Greek inspiration. The city, whether on its present site, or rather, as its most recent and authoritative historian thinks,[1] lying at first somewhat to the eastward where San Salvi now is, was undoubtedly Etruscan and filled with colonists from Fiesole. But as early as 200 B.C. it came under the power of Rome, whose great aristocrat Sylla treated it harshly in 82 B.C. as a rendezvous of the democratic party. Thirty years later, in 59, it was rebuilt, and perhaps now for the first time on its present site, under the government of Julius Cæsar. Till the fall of the Western Empire it remained Roman, receiving, as time went on, an ever deeper impression from the Imperial city by the Tiber. The name of *piccola Roma*, given to Florence by her early chroniclers, is some evidence how real and lasting that impression was, and confirms the idea we have that when the Empire, in its decay, lost character, the Roman type was best preserved in such places as Florence; the provincial cities of Northern or Middle Italy.

Yet the city was not merely or narrowly Italian, any more than Rome itself. Florence had, from early times, in virtue of her accessible situation on river and road, a considerable Greek colony in her midst, which must have found itself much at home among the still living remains of her more ancient Etruscan life and civilisation. And it was well, for in history there are few broad facts more often repeated or exactly ascertained than this, that the native Italian genius has always waited the hour when Greece and the East awake it; has never entered a new and fruitful path, or come to full consciousness and power save under a stimulus pointed to by the old proverb, *ab Oriente Lux*. We are now to see what resultant Spirit was shaped from these diverse, yet related, elements in their action and reaction at Florence.

Of what could the Roman, the Italian of these days, dream, save of the City, that wondrous centre of power and prestige which Rome had realised and imposed upon all who owned her sway? This ideal rose high at Florence when, in the third century of our era, she became the seat of the *Corrector*, or Provincial Governor,

[1] R. Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*, Berlin, 1896.

and it was nobly expressed in the buildings of her Forum and Capitol, modelled on those of Rome itself. Besides, she had her temples of Mars and Isis, her Theatre and Amphitheatre (*Parlascio*); her tombs and villas; her fountains and Triumphal Arch, not to speak of the aqueducts that led water to her Baths (Via delle Terme), or the elaborate drainage system in which the river was brought to flush and cleanse the town. Florence was a *piccola Roma* indeed, and this by virtue of her indwelling Spirit, which looked steadily to Rome, and sought, steadfastly and with success, to realise the high Ideal set by the capital.

Meanwhile what were the Greeks of Florence doing? Truly something new and strange, something apart from the common life of the city, and little likely, it might have seemed, to change, or even seriously influence, the Italian ideal of their neighbours. Let us watch what they are about, and, if it may be, surprise their secret. One of them is dead, and they are carrying his body to the grave beyond the river in the cemetery under the hill by the old south road, where now stands the Piazza of Santa Felicità. Night falls; they kindle lights as they move to the tomb, and what is this they are singing, or there or in their homes at eventide:— "Hail, gladdening Light, of His pure Glory poured, Who is the Immortal Father, Heavenly, Blest; Holiest of Holies, Jesus Christ, Our Lord." It is the ancient evening hymn of the Church, and here then, in Christianity itself, which they brought to Italy and in a special sense to Florence, we have the first, the strongest and most lasting contribution of the Eastern, the Greek Spirit to the formation and completion of the Italian Ideal. *Ab Oriente Lux.*

Observe the correspondence and the consequence. The Italians, as Romans, dreamed of the city, seeing its site everywhere, and everywhere striving with success to realise, in architecture and government alike, the glorious perfections of Rome. The Greeks, in so far at least as they accepted Christianity, had also their dream, their new Ideal, which they brought with them wherever they went; the Spirit of the new Faith, in which they "looked for a City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

Could, then, but these two, already so near of kin, be united; could the Greek spirituality enter and sublime the Italian dream, and, conversely, could Roman power to build and realise its ideal everywhere, be wedded to the Holy Vision, what a result were then seen, as of the Eternal City, the Heavenly, "coming down from God out of Heaven," among men; the very Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

How soon, then, we ask, did the Greek Spirit with its new message penetrate the Italian, the Florentine, and how far, and to what issues, did these two elements combine their forces, contrasted and yet related? For a time there is no sign that the city is to be stirred or even touched. Christianity remains in the position of a Greek, a semi-foreign sect, its most prominent figures the Bishop Zanobi and Deacon Eugenio—note the Greek names—its Patroness Santa Reparata, the Virgin Martyr of Cæsarea in Cappadocia; its gravestones written in Greek, as may still be seen in the Cloister of Santa Felicità; its characteristic contribution to the Italian language the words *Cataletto*, a bier, and *Catacomba*, a cemetery. All seems death, not life, far less power, and probably we are not far wrong in supposing that the average Florentine of the second or even the third century, if he thought of the matter at all, supposed that the Church of Christ was but a quaint Greek Burial-Society with peculiar usages of its own; very much, in short, as his descendant of to-day regards the Protestants in Florence and their Cemetery at the Allori.

But gradually a change appears. There are now converts among the Florentines, and the Latin language shows itself on Christian tombstones as the Faith begins to prevail. At last comes the crisis of A.D. 406. Stilicho, the Greek captain, true to the Faith of his countrymen, moves against Radagaisus, defeating him on the 23rd of August, the day of Santa Reparata. So, as the cloud passes, the sun shines out on a new Florence where every one is eager to enrol himself under the fortunate banner of the Cross. Already the Christians had their churches; San Lorenzo (A.D. 393) on its hill by the North road, and the primitive chapel by the Cemetery on the South (Santa Felicità). Now (400-425), the city

built for the first time within its walls, raising the Baptistery, where the crowds of her new converts assembled to receive the Christian Sign, and so the Greek impulse took full possession of the national mind.

It was indeed time that this great change should take place, and the Ideal of the city be spiritualised in the Greek, the Christian sense. Only thus could it survive the fall and ruin of that earthly Rome which had first suggested and imposed it. This sublime survival is the theme of Augustine in his *De Civitate Dei.* For the Barbarians were come to Rome (A.D. 410), and, in the fall of the Capital, the old Classic world passed away. Pagans said that the disaster came from the gods, indignant that the new Faith had deprived them of their offerings and wonted worship. Augustine (A.D. 413) replies that the true City is that which Faith reveals, and that Christianity is thus not destructive but conservative. It was, in fact, the means whereby the old Classic Ideal overpassed these times of ruin and confusion, and remained, in a finer and more powerful form, to inspire and direct the life of later ages.

In nothing, perhaps, is the undying power of this ideal better seen than in its effect on the Barbarians themselves. They came, they saw, they conquered, but, converted to a deeper, higher vision, they were soon themselves subdued under that Spirit of the City which now nothing could quench or destroy. Let us go with Orosius to Bethlehem, and there, in the cell of the aged Jerome, we shall hear something well worth listening to. A citizen of Narbonne has made the same pilgrimage, and is talking with the Saint. The conversation falls on Ataulfus, brother-in-law of Alaric the destroyer of Rome, and his successor in the Gothic power of southern France. The man from Narbonne says he knew Ataulfus well, and had often heard him tell how his first hope had been to see a purely Gothic Empire rise on the Roman ruins, but that, finding his countrymen too impatient of lawful order, he had changed his mind, resolving rather to aim at a restoration of Rome which should enlist and direct the Gothic vigour in its great enterprise. Ataulfus, in fact, married Galla Placidia, sister of Honorius, thus pledging his own life to this new policy of union. A hundred

years later Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths at Verona and Ravenna, spoke out in his Edict, making plain that he too had for his object the very *Civilitas* that Ataulfus had seen, perhaps more dimly; the Classic, and now Christian, Spirit that should tame the Goth and bring order to Italy in a federation of northern and southern races. In 668 the Lombards, yet more intractable than the Goths, had already spent their first age in the South, and not without feeling the influence of the same undying spirit. For Grimwald now adds to the Laws of Rothari provisions that recall the Roman Code, and, as Hodgkin has pointed out,[1] Paulus Diaconus, himself a Lombard, speaks, a few years later, as if Roman birth might be anything but contemptible in the eyes of the conquerors, and mentions the cities as centres of political and military power. Thus we know that the old dream was not dead, nor the Spirit of *Civilitas* spent, even under the Lombard rule.

The Laws of Luitprand (712–726) make it certain that this influence rather gained than lost ground as time went on, for now the great principle of equality as between conquerors and conquered—Lombards and Italians—was firmly established and freely confessed. Thus we come to the days of Frankish power when the Spirit we are studying had a bright and singular triumph. Charlemagne (768–814) is not only *Rex Francorum et Longobardorum,* but *Patricius Romanus* as well, with, be sure, the *City* deeply set in his heart. He visits Rome often; is crowned there on Christmas day of 800, dressed, to the people's delight, in the garb of Rome and proclaimed *Augustus*, the convinced and grateful heir of a mighty past whose glories he was keen to restore.

And what then of Florence all this time, and how shall we read the history of her chronicles, which say that the city by the Arno was rebuilt under Charlemagne? We know that the great Emperor stayed in the spring of 781 at *Vadum Medianum, finibus Florentinis* (Mezzano), did political business at Florence on his return from Rome, and kept Christmas there five years later; can there be any truth in the tradition that makes him the bounteous

[1] Hodgkin, *Italy and her Invaders*, VI, 306. The words are: Puellam ex *nobilissimo* Romanorum genere ortam.

Patron of the place, the author of its new state and prosperity? This, at any rate, it seems safe to conclude, that the time at which we are now arrived marks a favourable change in the fortunes of the city. But if such a change took place under Charlemagne, whose policy we know to have been singularly inspired by the ancient classic spirit, that could only be because of a correspondence in which the Florentines showed themselves keen to awake and bestir themselves under the stimulus of an idea long familiar to them, but now fortunate in the Imperial favour. The Florentine Spirit had not changed, then, since the days when the city won for herself the name of the *piccola Roma*, simply it now awoke to find itself, by grace of God and of Charlemagne, the spirit of the age, and, thus encouraged, prepared for new conflicts and triumphs.

The Carolingians had neither the clear vision nor the executive ability of the great Emperor who founded their dynasty. Charles had knit the Empire together by the appointment of his *Missi Dominici*, in this the successors of the Lombard *Gastaldi*, controlling the action of his provincial subordinates, and filling the whole State with his presence. These reins of wise government his weaker successors let drop, and Feudalism, the great enemy of *Civilitas* as Charles had conceived it, prepared to enter in. The disruptive forces now to attain their height were not new to Italy, they had already embarrassed the progress of racial union and civil development. As early as the times of Theodoric, Gothic impatience of control had made the *Comes Gothorum* and the *Saiones* a necessity. The Lombard Dukes of the sixth and seventh centuries continued the same fatal line, as may be seen, markedly, in the semi-independence of Spoleto and Benevento: a tendency common to all the Duchies, including that of Tuscany. In the following age—the early part of the eighth century—the movement towards separation becomes accentuated by the breaking up of the Duchies into lesser districts, under rulers each of which is a "Duke," and begins to transmit honour and power to his children: it is the rise of a hereditary nobility in Italy. This semi-independence was what Charlemagne sought to check by his *Missi*, and, as soon as that temporary restraint was removed under the

weak rule of his successors, this tendency to separation embodied itself in Feudalism, which, in Italy, meant the irresponsible rule of a foreign hereditary caste. *Civilitas*, the formation of the State from a fusion of Latin and barbaric elements in which the undying Classic ideal of the city should rule and prevail, could not have met in the gate a more deadly enemy than this.

At Florence the difficulty was early and severely felt. In the days of Charlemagne, Guidibrando was Duke here and handed on his office of local government to the Conte Scroto, the first of a long series of Conti and Marchesi by which we pass to Bonifazio the last Marquis, husband of Beatrice of Lorraine and father of the famous Matilda (1046–1115), who succeeded to his Marquisate in Tuscany. Under these superiors Florence knew to her cost the ancestors, and at last the persons, of the local foreign nobility who, generation after generation, ruled and oppressed the country round her gates, and did their best to crush the rising power of the city in the eleventh century: the Conti Guidi, Alberti, Cattani, and Cadolinghi, against which we have seen her draw her first arms. Command of river and road may have been the immediate object, but the cause of Florence was not bounded by the necessities of her trade, it was the great enterprise of the times in which she then engaged, the defence of the classic *Civilitas* against the insolent stranger who represented the forces of separation and disruption that would have ruined the rising State.

Let us not overlook the serious issue to which the city stood committed in these her first wars. In this, the cause of civilisation, Florence could not, dared not, appeal to the forces of the Empire to help her, for, since Charlemagne, the Empire had changed its policy sadly, and such power as still remained to it was that which pressed on the city from the surrounding castles: the very power, then, against which she was in arms. But if the State was her enemy in this enterprise, destined to end in its renewal, Florence did not lack a friend to whom she was already bound by ancient ties, and to whom she now turned naturally in the hour of her need. Over against the State, as represented by the Mediæval Empire, stood the Church in its visible form and growing political

power, and, when she cast in her lot with the Church, Florence did not become Guelph for the first time, rather she fell back upon a common sympathy that was agelong, sure that in its practical effects it would not fail her now.

That the Church was the friend of Florence to which she appealed in her strife with feudalism and the Empire, is one more proof, were such needful, of the real nature and aim of the Florentine spirit; its firm grasp of the ancient ideal, its undimmed vision of the *City*. For, when Rome the material capital of Italy and of the Empire fell, it was the Church which stepped into the place of the dead power and, as a visible organisation, carried on the traditions of the ancient classic world. Alaric and his Goths had spared her for this. In old Rome the Church had been simply the State, in one—the religious—sphere of its activity. Now, the Church of Rome had come to occupy the old ground, and, on its political side, to represent the State, at least in Italy; her dioceses modelled on the old provincial districts; her Papal Legates representing the lost powers of Tribune and Centurion; her Popes elected and seated in Rome, as the Emperors had been, and not without occasional suspicion of that simony which corresponded but too exactly to the donatives of Roman corruption; her language the survival of Classic culture of which she was the depository. Under Gregory I she makes peace with the Lombards, thus authenticating her claim to represent what was still unbroken in Roman power and Italian politics. Justinian (554) had already given the Bishops power to elect civil judges; the Churches the custody of standard weights and measures. Thus the Church had nearly covered the whole ground of civil Government, and, when the Empire—so called—weakened and retired with the successors of Charlemagne, it was Rome in a new form, partly religious but mostly political, which again imposed itself south of the Alps as the native head and resource of national movements.

We need not stay to examine the particular details which had long prepared a peculiarly close relation between Florence and the Church; such as may be seen in the age of the city's decay, from 542 onwards, when the seat of the civil Government was at Fiesole,

and when the Churches of Florence were served in the midst of a desolation perhaps not unlike that which still surrounds Sant' Appollinare in Classe at Ravenna. This was the Church's opportunity, of which we may be sure full advantage was taken, and improved as time went on; as witness the *donative*—probably false, but even so significant—by which, in 774, Charlemagne is said to have given Tuscany as well as Central Italy to the Pope; and the equivocal position of the great Countess Matilda, who, excluded from succession to her father by Salic law, yet ruled as daughter of the Church, and in such a way as sufficiently shows the strength of the power behind her throne; the power to which, dying, she bequeathed her whole possessions. Enough that under a dominant Feudalism Florence stood firm for the cause of the classic Ideal; her relation to the Church, the great champion and organ of *Civilitas*, was thus and thenceforth clearly established and defined.

Nor did this relation lack a picturesque symbol of the new hopes it inspired. In the eleventh century a story began to pass current, telling how the body of San Zanobi had wrought a famous miracle in the moment of translation from its first resting-place in San Lorenzo to the Cathedral Church of San Salvatore. The procession which bore it passed by an ancient elm near the north door of the Baptistery, and the Saint, putting forth his hand, touched and restored to budding life the tree that age had withered. Lorenzo, Archbishop of Amalfi (1024-48), is the first to tell of this wonder in the life of the Saint, nor was the feast of his translation observed in the Church of Florence till the twelfth century, when the memorial column which we see to-day by San Giovanni was first erected to mark the place of the legendary tree. Something, nay much, of uncertainty there is in all this, but something too of truth and deep significance. The tree, for a reason which we shall yet have to examine, was the natural historic symbol of the Florentine State. The Saint, not less historically and naturally, represented the Church at Florence—having been its first prominent figure in the days when the city was shaken and turned to the Faith. And the story of the miracle then, what can it represent but the sense of the eleventh and twelfth centuries when it first

had currency—the sense that State and Church were one in their ideal of the *City;* that this union it was which brought new life and strength to Florence, and fairly revived the hopes which ages of barbarism and decay had seemed to quench? The central market-place, with its Church of St. Mary the Guide, was not more symbolic of material and commercial Florence than the

The Cross of S. Zanobi.

column of San Zanobi is of her civic ideal, and the semi-spiritual force which promised to secure its realisation.

But let us pass from the symbol to the facts, which will be found significant enough. In 1138 the Florentine host marched against the Castle of the Conte Uguccione at Piticciano, near Colle di Val d'Elsa. This feudal stronghold fell, and the Count, who belonged to the great Alberti stock, was forced to submit and pledge

Piticciano to Florence for his obedience. Here a difficulty arose, partly because such action was forbidden by a decree of Lothair, and partly because the law of these days, and the sense of the feudal system, left no place for a city to act as a *superior*. Some shrewd head, probably that of an ecclesiastic, suggested that what the State could not do as such, it might yet accomplish in its alternative form as the Church. No sooner said than done, and behold, then, the Church of San Giovanni and the Bishop of Florence representing the city in receiving the pledge of Piticciano! Nearly the same procedure was followed in 1173, when Guiscardo and Roberto Rossi pledged their lands of Poggio to the city as representing San Giovanni and the Bishop, and, in yet later times, the old practice was still hinted at by the custom of a candle, which used to be carried to St. John's Altar on behalf of the principal vassals of Florence. Not in vain, then, had San Zanobi's column been set up; the legend spoke true, for, in the new life and growing prosperity of the city, the political position and power of the Church formed an important element.

Before Florence, thus strengthened, the feudal barriers one by one went down, but there is more to be said, for, in these first wars of the twelfth century, an important advance was made towards the new society, the ideal *Civilitas* which feudalism would have made for ever impossible. To see how and what this was let us return for a moment to the year 1138 and the siege of Piticciano. Not content with receiving his submission, Florence required of Count Uguccione that he should keep residence within her walls for several months in the year. This condition appears in other cases. It was, as the future proved, one of the most important results of the war that Florence forced the foreign nobles of the contado to live at close quarters with the body of her citizens. For, if the fusion of the Germanic and Latin races, to which Ataulfus Theodoric and Charlemagne looked forward, was ever to come about, and bear its due fruit in the rise of a new world that should repeat and surpass the triumphs of ancient Rome, in some such way as this must the wonder be brought about. In acting as she did Florence, whether consciously or no, once

more affirms her Ideal, and prepares for the triumph of the Classic spirit in its modern form.

Yet the immediate result of the city's policy was far from encouraging. The enforced residence of the feudal nobility within the walls of Florence brought them into a neighbourhood with the other citizens which was merely one of locality, and promised little for any closer union. Their sympathies, as was natural, were with each other, and, as of old, they continued to hold aloof from the Florentines proper, whom difference of race and rank engaged them to shun and despise. The houses they built in Florence were castles, like those of the contado they had been forced to leave, and before 1165 they had formed among themselves the Party of the Towers, proposing a mutual defence, if not, indeed, the triumph of their interests and policy in the city. The effect of the civil plan so far had simply been to transfer the seat of war from the country to the city, from the roads to the streets, where it became a conflict at close quarters; the towers filled with men-at-arms and piled with stones as the readiest missiles; the streets shut by chains stretched from house to house, and the names of Guelph and Ghibelline beginning to distinguish the parties between which Florence was now divided. But we know that the difference and conflict were older than the names; it was the ancient *Civility* that was at stake, and for more than a hundred years of such strife it remained still doubtful whether the true spirit and cause of Florence would be strong enough to conquer the forces that made for disruption and disorder.

In 1177, when these closer wars began, the Party of the Towers was led by the powerful family of the Uberti, the ancestors of that Schiatta who slew Buondelmonte in 1215 by the Ponte Vecchio, and of the still more famous Farinata, who triumphed at the red day of Montaperto in 1260. Yet even so, thus led and so far victorious, the Ghibellines could not escape the fate prepared for them as residents in Florence, and at last the policy that had made them such was fully justified by its final success. The Spirit of the place, mightier than the Guelphic arms, was about them from the first, then upon them in the triumph of the Primo Popolo (1250),

till even their hearts began to know the charm, and acknowledge a city which conquered its very victors: Farinata, fresh from the Arbia and its waves of blood, resolutely opposing his own party when they wished to destroy Florence utterly and transfer its seat to Empoli.

So we come to the days of 1283 and to the *Priori*, under whom the triumph of the Guelphs was complete, and when, for the first time, the Spirit of Florence appears freely and fully in her public constitution. Nobility, the pride of the Ghibellines, who cried, with Farinata, "chi fur' gli maggior tui?" now became a civic disqualification, and, at once, behold the new names of those who would no longer be known as the Tornaquinci and Cavalcanti, and the eagerness of that whole party to enrol themselves as members of the Trade Guilds they once so heartily despised. Their ancestors had, perforce, come to dwell within the walls, they themselves now entered voluntarily the civic life to obtain political power and prestige. And the Spirit before which they bow flies far and high. In 1289 Florence decrees that liberty is the right of man, sets free the *Contadini*, who as *glebæ adscripti*, had been the slaves and chief support of the foreign nobility in the days of their feudal power, and makes them, in their new quality and gratitude, a wide basis on which the rates and policy of the reformed State might surely rely. It is a realised *Civilitas* at last, in Florence; the long dream has become a fact before which the night of the old world veils its face and passes, with the tragic figure of Dante, *ultimus*, not *Romanorum* surely, but *Medioævi*, who must go to his wanderings in desert places because for a moment the shadow of what had been, as it passed, fell upon him. For thus it was that he, the son of Guelphic parents; he who dreamed the *City* as none other before or since, seemed to his countrymen a Ghibelline; the fit mark for those stern edicts of repression and exclusion that now guarded Florence in her late and hard-won triumph. Never did the city stand higher, or display more fully that indwelling Spirit which ruled her life and fate.

Having thus seen the Spirit of Florence, the classic ideal of the

city, reach at last its full expression in the sphere of civil Government, we obey the suggestion of Dante's name and pass, with the poet, from politics to literature, still following the same quest, that we may trace, in brooding mind and written page alike, the further and more splendid fortunes of the Florentine ideal in another and more lasting development. Let us begin with the great poet himself. To Dante, his native town is "that beautiful and famous Daughter of Rome," as he calls her in the *Convito;* and, toiling up the hill of the *Purgatorio*, he learns his supreme hope in the words—

E sarai meco senza fine Cive
Di quella Roma onde Cristo è Romano,

which show how deeply the dream of the *City* had possessed his heart. Indeed it was the very tragedy of his life—the tragedy that issued in the Divine Comedy—that in him Florence had cast off, of all her sons, the one who knew her best and loved her most, in whom the Florentine Spirit most truly lived and found its one deathless utterance.

This Spirit is not to be seized in mere isolated passages, or fairly expressed in quotations ; it pervades the whole of the great poem, where Christian and Classic figures and ideas are harmonised, as Classic and Christian forces had in fact combined to guide the history and form the Spirit of Florence. Thus Virgil is Dante's master and guide ; Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan the first shades he meets in the underworld, where Charon is still ferryman. Yet the Church of Christ has its own unique part to play in the great drama, and the Christian Heaven, the Eternal City of God, closes the splendid climax, and closes it without offence because in a scene where the supernatural is so dominant that the unnatural and impossible lose their power to affect us.

To one that had not studied his work it might seem indeed as if the Classic element in Dante must be a mere result of his studies under Brunetto Latini. That this is not so, however, a well-known passage of the poem warns us, by speaking of the Florentine mother, who—

Favoleggiava con la sua famiglia
De' Troiani, e di Fiesole, e di Roma.

Evidently then, his teachers had but refined, corrected and supplemented what Dante drank in with his mother's milk, the classic Spirit which was the natural heritage of Florence, and which found a new and enduring expression in her great poet's verse.

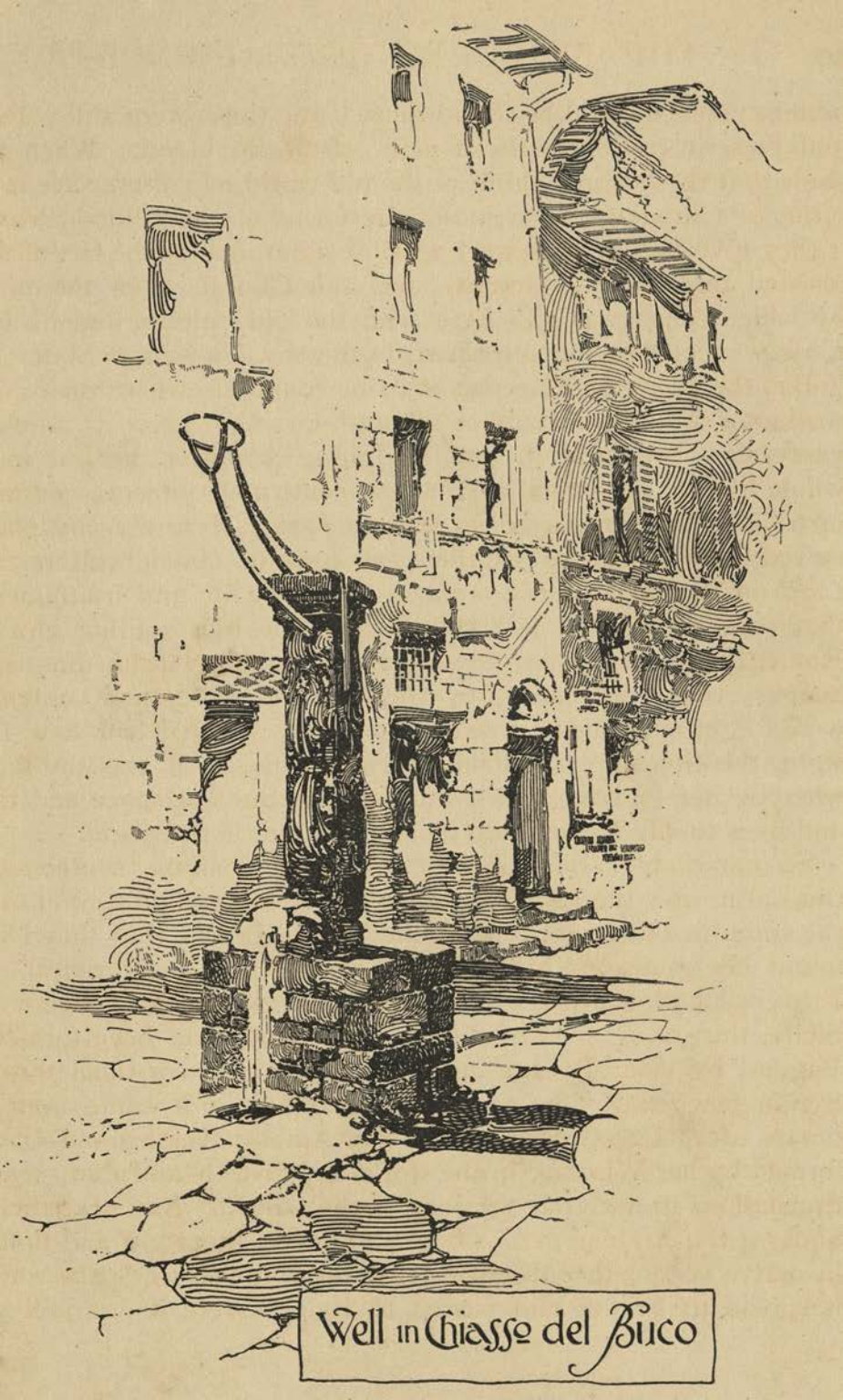
If we are curious to examine more closely these traditions of a mighty past not too well understood, the historian Villani, either in his original text or in the version of the pseudo-Malespini, opens a fantastic world which we need have no difficulty in recognising as the literary form of the tales told for ages in Florentine nurseries. Villani goes to Rome for the Jubilee of 1300 and finds his spirit awake there to the purpose of writing a history of his native city, under the guidance of "ancient authors." "Malespini," though a citizen of Florence, claims Roman blood, and finds his material in certain "old writings" preserved in Rome: chronicles of what happened at Fiesole and Florence. So we hear of Atlas the first founder of Fiesole, whose great-grandson Troio gave his name to the city of Troy; of Æneas and his coming to Italy; of Romulus and Rome; of Catiline at Fiesole, and how he defeated the Romans by the river Arno, when Fiorino their King and Captain was slain, and where, presently, rose the city of Florence, so called to commemorate his name. Much of the same matter fills the collection of novels called the Pecorone, where at least it would seem more in place. Finally, *c.* 1375, the history of Villani appeared in *terza rima* from the pen of Antonio Pucci, changed in form, but preserving all the *naïveté* of the original.

Doubtless it is the true Spirit of Florence that speaks in these pages of so-called history, and we are more than ever sure of it when we see the strange confusion of time and thought they betray. In Malespini, Belisea, the wife of Catiline, keeps Whit-Sunday by hearing mass at Fiesole, just as, in the *Filocopo* of Boccaccio (1340), the Pope mixes with personages bearing classical names, and even takes orders from Iris as the ambassadress of Juno. For these are not freaks, such as might be played in our own day, when fancy deliberately chooses to free herself from the bonds of time and of history: they are, in varying degrees perhaps, the spontaneous unstudied expression of their author's mind. No

better evidence could be found that classic times were still a living and present reality to these heirs of classic blood. When they show that they cannot think of the old world of culture save in the terms of Christianity and under the forms of the Church, what is it they give but the strongest possible assurance of the fact already insisted on, that Christianity and the Church were the means by which touch was still kept with the old culture, and its ideal *Civilitas* realised, and surpassed, in the new Florentine State.

But the Spirit of Florence is to be found elsewhere than in the works of a limited number of authors who give it articulate expression; we meet it, and recognise its power, no less in the whole literary movement of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in which Florence played so great a part. Here the city plainly served herself heiress to the past ages of classic culture; her *Civilitas* issuing in a *Humanitas*—a literary life and fruitfulness—that recalled, and at last consciously, the one abiding glory of Rome, the voice of the old world which, being dead, thus spake anew. And it was well, for, when her old policy and contention were forgotten, and the freedom to which they led had sunk from sight, this literature, to which Florence gave birth, was the means whereby her undying Spirit broke the bounds of space and time, and lives to-day in the mind of Europe and of the world.

So remarkable a development could issue from one source alone, the Latin, now the Italian, genius, awake at last and fruitful under the stimulus of Greece and of the East. It was thus that Dante found his voice, for his first lays were lisped in Provençal, and Provence had learned to sing from the Saracens of Spain and Sicily, the strong sons of those whose minds had been formed at Bagdad by what Byzantium still knew, and gave them through Syrian teachers. This early impression did not come from the poetry of ancient Greece—which the Arabs never learned—it was formed by her Wisdom, in the works of Aristotle and Plato read in translations from Syriac versions of the Greek. But, nevertheless, under it the Arabian genius began to live in literature and flourish in native verse; the Moors carried the impulse to Spain whence it spread to France and passed to Italy. Here it was still vital



Well in Chiasso del Buco

enough to bring Dante that new inspiration which he, of all Florentines, was quick to feel. The title of the *Vita Nuova* was, indeed, better chosen than its author could then have known, for it was the classic spirit that found these new forms and renewed its youth in him.

If the impulse of the East and of Greece was thus powerful even when it moved across the ages, and spoke haltingly through the forms of an alien culture, what may we not expect when its contact with the genius of Italy already awakened becomes direct and immediate? The eventful moment is at hand. In 1359 Boccaccio visited Petrarch at Milan, and heard how he had found and talked with a Greek, or at least a Calabrian familiar enough with Greece and its language to delight Petrarch by reading him passages from Homer. Boccaccio caught fire at once, persuaded the Government to set up a chair of Greek at Florence, and brought Leontio Pilato—for so the Calabrian was called—to be the first professor. He taught for three years, and furnished Boccaccio with a complete translation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in Latin, as well as sixteen dialogues from Plato: material that was eagerly studied by a society now meeting in Florence for that purpose. So, from 1363, the year when Pilato left, we reach the times of Chrysoloras, who professed at Florence during the last four years of the century. This was the teacher of Palla Strozzi, Ambrogio Traversari, Poggio, Filelfo, and other less distinguished amateurs of the Greek language. Thus, when the Council came to Florence in 1439, where Pope Palæologus and Patriarch sought to compose the great Schism, the learned Greeks who disputed in the cause of religion found themselves welcomed in their own tongue by Lionardo Aretino the Secretary of the Republic, and were the objects of flattering attention to those whom Chrysoloras had trained. The most remarkable of these strangers was Gemistus Plethon, who gained the ear and mind of Cosimo *Pater Patriæ*, and thus gave Florence her Platonic Academy, with Marsilio Ficino as its first and most distinguished President.

It is needless to say that the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which sent so many cultured Greeks westward, mightily enforced the

impression already made on Italy by the classic spirit in its Eastern development. Let us rather return to a survey of the whole field of Italian, and especially of Florentine, culture during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, that we may feel, however superficially, the results of this impulse in the order and progress of their manifestation. First then, we have the period of original invention, distinguished by the great names of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. Florentines all three, either of the city or the province, these were the founders of Italian letters, the framers of that "dolce stil nuovo" which became the sweet and splendid vehicle of their thought, and definitely established the Tuscan as the literary language of Italy. Theirs was the golden age, setting the standard of style, and fixing the laws of Italian poetry and prose for all succeeding time.

But, of the three, if Dante stands somewhat apart in splendid isolation, Petrarch and Boccaccio offer a point of connection with that succeeding literature for which they laid the sure foundation. They were the first *Humanists*, in the narrow and technical sense of the word. In them the Spirit of Florence, conscious of a great past, set forth as for enchanted treasure-isles and returned, her argosies laden with the rich spoils of classic antiquity. Homer, in a copy sent to Petrarch from Constantinople; Quintilian, which he unearthed at Florence in 1350; the private letters of Cicero found at Verona; the library of originals and transcripts gathered by Boccaccio in his travels, and freely communicated to his friends: these were but the *Primitiæ* of the old world, the first gleanings of the rich harvest Florence was yet to reap in her Medicean age. Then, manuscripts came by the shipload to Italy, and her own forgotten stores were eagerly drawn upon in a new commerce of ancient texts and exquisite modern copies.

Here we may well pause to note, in passing, the singular correspondence thus revealed between the literary movement in Florence during the fifteenth century and that of the times of Charlemagne. The great Emperor, like Cosimo and Lorenzo dei Medici, had filled his Court with men of letters; had formed a literary coterie, with Alcuin at its head, which answers singularly to the Florentine

Academy. He also had commissioned the collection of manuscripts, and especially their multiplication in *Scriptoria* that formed the famous carolingian handwriting, just as the so-called Roman letter was a specialty of the copies ordered by the Medici. And it may even be that some vague memory of this anticipation of her golden age had as much to do as anything else with the strange vitality of the tradition that bade Florence look to Charlemagne as her first founder. Certain is it that, in the fifteenth century as in the eighth, it was the same backward glance, the same vision of the *City*, and policy of *Civilitas*, which inspired a common *Humanity* in Charlemagne and in Florence; the Spirit of the City and of the Emperor is one and the same, known as such by its corresponding fruits.

It is well we have the means of verifying this essential fact ere the silver cord be loosed, and the golden bowl broken, and the Spirit of Florence pass. Already there are symptoms of coming change. The great period of original production in the fourteenth century gives place, in the fifteenth, to the labours of mere stylists, and a mannered imitation of the Classics. Petrarch and Boccaccio would have deplored, as Sacchetti did, this result of their inquiries and discoveries, while Dante would have kept his finest scorn for the opinion of Mirandola that Latin was the only literary language, and that the Divine Comedy failed to reach the level of the licentious *Canti Carnascialeschi*. The inevitable end was near, for to imitation succeeded corruption: a literary decline superadded to the decay in morals, and surely seen in the hybrid tongue of the *Hypnerotomachia*, and in the *Maccaronea* (1517) of Folengo.

The causes of such decline are not far to seek. The progress of age, and onset of disease, are not without their corresponding effects upon the spirit, even in the individual man; and it is no less so in the state. The substance of Florence, as we have seen in considering her commercial story, was already in decay. The course of her literature then, from originality to imitation, exaggeration and corruption, was no less marked with the signs of the times. And in this it was but symptomatic of some decay affecting the very Spirit from which it sprang; the *Humanitas*

sharing inevitably the state and fortune of its antecedent *Civilitas*. Savonarola had still the vision of the *City*, it is true, but how changed from the great days of Florence! Partly he exaggerates the relation to the Church that had made her Guelph, and would have Florence a pure theocracy, and partly he turns his back on the age-long ideal of the place, bidding the citizens seek Venice for the model of their new Government. It was time that the end should come in the siege and fall of Florence (1530), and with the death at Gavinana of that Ferruccio, *ultimus Florentinorum*, or, as we may almost say, *Romanorum*, on whom the last hopes of his fellow-citizens were set in vain.

And yet, in another, a wider sense, this moment, where we pause, was not the end but the beginning. As the soul of man does not die but passes, so the Spirit of Florence, in the very decay and death of the city, proved its immortality, winning a wider freedom in the very hour when Florentines seemed only fit to be again enslaved. For that which was sane in the soul of Savonarola came to its kingdom in the great Reform beyond the Alps, and the last achievements of the Florentine *Civilitas* are found, not under the Medicean *Astuteness* to which it fell captive, but in the rise and triumph of the Modern State.

CHAPTER III

THE FORM

IT is impossible to think of this aspect of our subject without finding, at the very outset, a grave difficulty in the way. The form of civic life in Florence ought, of course, to result inevitably from the Substance acted on by the Spirit: that is from the commercial activity of the city as modified and shaped by her indwelling Ideal. Therefore, if we have drawn our divisions well, and divined aright the contents of the first two, the last should follow, easily and as a matter of course, nor should it be hard to explain how the shape of Florentine Government came to be what in fact it was.

Yet the first view of the facts with which we are now to deal is far from encouraging. They are not simple but complex, and succeed each other in systems apparently without order or reason, till we begin to suspect that the Florentine Government never knew any other permanence than that of its own constant variety. To the rule of the Consuls, in the twelfth century, succeeds that of the Podestà, only to be supplanted by the Primo Popolo of 1250, which, in its turn, sinks under the Ghibelline success of ten years later. Hardly have the Guelphs changed the Government, and established themselves firmly under the first *Priori* in 1283, when the fourteenth century introduces us to the new parties of the *Bianchi* and *Neri*, the complexities of election by *imborsazione*, the tyranny of the Duke of Athens and, finally, the new settlement of 1380. In the fifteenth, the old landmarks are again swept away by the rising tide which carried the Medici to power, and, before that power is finally consolidated under their successors of the following age, we find Florence, consistent only in her variety, twice return to a Republican form of Government (1494, 1527); the

former introduced by the commanding influence of Savonarola, the latter destroyed when the city fell to the besiegers in 1530. Such a survey, brief and superficial as it is, shows enough to give us pause. For, either this people was unstable beyond the wont of man—and this their acknowledged excellence is enough to disprove at once—or there must be some underlying history which, if we could read it, would immediately and sufficiently relate the changes of their Government to the simple consistent Substance and Spirit of their State. What that underlying history may have been it must now concern us to discover.

The political life of Italy, even at the present day, is not without signs that show how little visible forms of Government may represent the real forces that bind and move her people. Laws may pass, courts be constituted and judges do justice, while all the time a whole underworld of sentiment, embodying itself in custom, and perpetuating its claims in forceful action, may, at every point, be defeating and checkmating control, waiting an opportunity to gain the upper hand, and, meanwhile, expressing, in its very lawlessness, a sense of that which the people hold sacred; a protest against powers they feel to be unnatural and hostile. Such, for example, is the well-known Mafia of Sicily, the island where Greek, Carthaginian and Roman; Byzantine, Saracen and Norman; Hohenstaufen, Angevin and Spaniard; Savoyard, Bourbon and Italian have successively ruled, and in vain, without ever completely conciliating, because never fully representing, the traditional popular sentiment of honour and justice, the famous Sicilian *Omertà*. And this sentiment, stronger than written law, more permanent than any of these successive Governments, has been the ruling power in Sicily, age after age, giving to her people such unity and national character as they possess. To overlook the Mafia is to make Sicilian history a mere kaleidoscope of conquest; to give this strange phenomenon the first place in Sicilian studies is to seize the vital, the permanent element that underlies all these changes: the simple key that unlocks the secret of the whole.

We have called the Mafia a strange phenomenon, but its strange-

The Port' al Prato

Notice that the top of this tower has been cut down & opened for cannon under roof.

ness need not make us suppose it singular, or confined to the island with which its name is now associated. Many hints lead us rather to suppose that the mainland has seen the like, and that much of Italian history, in its frequent obscurities, might be cleared up by supposing the existence of such a state of things. How then if this be the clue to the perplexing story of Florentine Government? What if, all along, the silent irresistible people has been at the helm; their unconfessed sentiments and aspirations the true guide of Florence; their association and organisation, hardly betrayed by the documents on which written history chiefly depends, the one permanent element in the midst of changes that, till we relate them to this constant underworld, must needs seem senseless and capricious? Such a discovery, could we make it, might well bring order and sense where, without it, all had worn the aspect of confusion, and wearied reason itself in vain conjectures after the truth.

It is plain, however, that, if the case of Florence be at all as we have supposed it, full proof of this permanent element in her people, or a complete history of its influence on her successive forms of Government, are alike out of the question. The course of subterranean waters is conjectured rather than known; inferred from the places where rivers disappear and springs rise again. So we must be content to proceed by way of conjecture and inference rather than of exact proof or full discovery, satisfied if, here and there, the stream of constant tendency betray itself, coming to the light at important crises of history, and thus giving us cause to find its abiding presence and influence under each and every change in the Florentine Government.

We begin then with what we have already found to be primary and substantial in Florence—the commercial life of the city—and we discover the fundamental, the permanent element of her Government in the association of the Trade Guilds which, from the first, that commerce suggested and favoured. The Ostian College of wood-merchants and the Pisan *Calendar*, in Roman times, left a succession, which the Barbarian inroads, and the desolation of the sixth and seventh century, might interrupt but

could not altogether defeat. For it is plain that Florence lived again, and lived as of old by commerce established on the old lines of unforgotten association; the *scholæ* of her Roman days perpetuating themselves in the Guilds, the *Arti* of later times. How early this revival may have taken place it is not easy to determine exactly. Villani in his *History* (III, 85), tells us that, as the result of an inquiry made in 1353 by the *Priori*, it was found from old writings that the custom of running a *Palio* on the day of Santa Reparata dated from the translation of the body of San Zanobi to that Church, "and since our ancestors were not then in such flourishing circumstances, they ordered that on the said day should be run a Palio of eight braccia of cheap *cardinalesco* cloth, which race was run on foot . . . but the City, to restore this record of the past, commanded (in 1353) that the prize should consist of twelve braccia of fine scarlet, and that the race should be run on horseback." Now it is evidently the Calimala, the primary Art of Florence, which supplies, in the one case and in the other, these prizes competed for at the city's most characteristic *Festa*. The Calimala, then, was already in existence when Santa Reparata was built, and when the body of San Zanobi was removed thither from San Lorenzo. Probably we shall not be far wrong if we fix the eighth century as the time in question, when Florence began to revive, and her Arts, led by this of the Calimala, to assert their independence. For, passing by the doubtful deed of Bishop Speciosus, which mentions the Church of Santa Reparata as on foot in 724, we observe that the eighth century was the age when translations of holy relics, before forbidden, began to be practised; and that the same age also saw the collection of those recipes for dyes and other pigments which we have already studied in the Lucca MS. of the *Compositiones ad Tingenda*. Evidently the ancient *scholæ* had already found their succession, and the Arts were well established at Florence.

The first nucleus of Florentine Government lay, then, in the Trade Guilds, and its earliest form must have been the simple yet sufficient shape which their management almost at once assumed. They had their secrets, and therefore, we must suppose, a *disciplina*

arcani among them, curiously answering to that which held the custody of ecclesiastical mysteries in troublous times. This discipline must have required the election of office-bearers in each Art to administer the oath of secrecy to entrants; to keep the roll of members; to guard and use the common funds; to supervise production; to check underselling; compose differences; settle prices, and, in short, control the general affairs of the Guild. And, as in Florence we see a city where the Calimala was chief indeed, yet only *prima inter pares*, we are forced to conclude that the different Arts must have early found the need for some common ground where all might meet in the persons of their duly elected representatives for the decision of questions involving their relations to one another, and thus for the command and control of the common civic life. So, by the most natural steps of inference, we arrive at the earliest form of the Florentine State, which was doubtless developed from the Trade Guild, just as that itself had arisen out of the relations and needs of those engaged in a common employment. And that our thought has followed lines which are not merely ideal but historical as well, appears from the fact that, in 1182, Florence expressly provided that the heads of the Calimala should have power to act in place of the ordinary magistrates of the city, were the central Government to lack its wonted representatives. Such a provision supposes a return to what must have been primitive conditions, and if the leading Art were judged fit, in an emergency, to supply the place of the common Councillors, this could only be because the Government itself was but a developed form of the earlier Guilds.

That such a development had already taken place in the eighth century seems evident. For civic government must exist before, perhaps long before, it rises to the heights of privilege. But this privilege was the proud boast of Florence as early as carolingian times, when, and precisely in 883, the documents speak of a certain Cumperto, who came *de Livertate Florentiae*, "from the Freedom of Florence." Now Charles the Fat can hardly be supposed the author of anything so full of initiative and of consequence; the grant must have been bestowed by the hand of the great Emperor

himself, and was probably the most definite among all the reasons leading Florence to hail Charlemagne (774–814) as her authentic founder and builder. Under the shield and banner of this "Libertas" then, the Florentine Government ceased to be a mere combination of Trade Guilds, and, while still retaining its natural relation to these, the first elements of its being, rose to the place and promise of a true State.

No sooner found than lost, or at least lost to sight, the free city of Florence disappears under the growing feudalism of the tenth and eleventh centuries, and so completely that feudal forms alone have left their traces in the writings of the time. Yet surely here the river only sinks from view that it may find and follow a not less certain, though subterranean, channel. Nothing leads us to suppose that the industrial life of the city ceased, or even suffered serious interruption. The Trade Guilds must have continued to exist, then, in a tolerable freedom from interference; and even their association in the common civic Council probably persisted, though the *Potestas* of that *Presidium Municipale*, the visible head of the State, was now a Count or a Marquis.

We foresaw that, were our view of Florentine Government correct, it must find its proof and justification at moments of crisis, in the reappearance of the original and constant element of the State, which might then be expected to rise to the surface and force an acknowledgment from history. Now this is exactly what happens in the latter half of the eleventh century. In 1068 the visible head of Florence was the Marchese Goffredo, the second husband of Beatrice, and, by her, the stepfather of the Countess Matilda. But his policy was opposed to that of the clergy and citizens generally. It is not wonderful that the city should have despaired of changing her ruler's mind or winning him over to the popular cause. But it is highly significant that, when the heat of this difference was at its fiercest, there comes out of the fire a shape we cannot fail to recognise as that of the Florentine State in rudimentary form. The city appeals to the Pope (who, by the by, was own brother to Goffredo), thus ignoring the Marquis, and affirming, at need, its independent political entity as the *Clerus et Populus Florentinus*, to quote the

terms of the letter sent to Rome. And Pope Stephen XI, through his Legate San Piero Damiano, acknowledges the fact, as of a city in real being, by addressing his reply *Civibus Florentinis*, "To the Citizens of Florence." This is no fresh spring of independent political life, let us remember, but the sudden forceful issue of a far-off source; the reappearance of a stream which had long borne, in darkness and silence, the pressure of feudalism till its time was come; the *Libertas* of Charlemagne once more asserting itself with no uncertain voice. Now such voices are apt to wake echoes, and such self-assertion to prove a potent attraction. So it was, and speedily, at Florence which, if we are to credit Villani, built new walls in 1078 to guard the homes of her rapidly increasing population. It is time then that, for a moment, we turn from the city to the country, and pay some attention to the Contado of Florence as the field from which so notable an immigration came.

The country-people in the neighbourhood of Florence, though living under very different conditions from those which prevailed in the city, were not without a certain common life and primitive organisation of their own. Workers on the land, they coöperated with each other in part at least of their tilth and pasture, and these "commons," like the town trades, were the origin of a simple political system which bound the agricultural population together by the most natural ties. The *vicinanza* settled the common affairs of a single neighbourhood, and, as larger interests came to be involved, the group of adjoining *vicinanze* was formed and evolved as a kind of a district council for their settlement, especially in cases where narrow local feeling ran high, and it was desirable to have an appeal from the perhaps prejudiced views of the immediate *vicini*. The traditional meeting-place of the *vicini* was marked in each district by a tree—an ancient oak, elm or walnut—under whose shade the people gathered, or they met in the neighbouring church if the weather made it necessary that their Court should have shelter. This latter use reminds us to notice, in general, that Church and State were still in these days interchangeable functions of the one body-politic, and, in particular, that the *vicinanza*, in its narrower or wider sense, was but the *popolo* and *plebs*, the

parrocchia and *pieve*, the parish and parochial group, acting now in a civil interest.

It is plain that this organisation of the country corresponds perfectly with what we have found to obtain in the city, where the single trades with their guilds answer to the *popoli* of the *contado*, and the common civic government to the district council of the *Plebs*. Yet a difference there was, and one of no little consequence; for the city of Florence had her *Libertas*, which her feudal superior might conceal and minimise but could not destroy, while the poor *contadini*, *glebæ adscripti*, were held in the full grasp of the Counts who owned them, and who exacted their service as a matter of feudal right. Hence the inevitable attraction exercised by Florence over her *contado* long before she came to have definite authority there: an attraction which rose to its height with the firm assertion of herself she made in 1068, and which resulted in a movement from country to town that greatly increased her population.

This movement followed lines that were already familiar in the *contado*. The nobility there were, not infrequently, at strife among themselves, and the *contadini* in these petty wars had cause to find the neighbourhood of their lord's castle a convenient shelter. From their huts and *casolari* then, they had moved to the hill where the Count dwelt, acquiring a kind of prescriptive right there on condition of building their new homes in such wise that, together with the keep of the Count, the whole formed a *Castello*, or defensible strength. When the freedom of Florence began to attract the *contadini*, it was natural, then, that they should see in her a political unity dominating their own districts, as these the scattered *popoli* of which they were composed: a new superior, to whose power they might fly for protection from the bondage and exactions of the Counts. So, if wider, higher walls encircled Florence, as Villani says, in 1078, these would be but the natural, traditional consequence of this immigration; built to make her the commanding *Castello* of the province. Henry IV hurled his host against that barrier four years later, but in vain. In 1090–93 the citizens taxed themselves to strengthen these defences, within

which, observe, the palace of Matilda found no place, but the Church and House of San Giovanni, and the elm tree of San Zanobi, were more than ever central : the true symbol of a revived and developed State.

In 1115 the Contessa Matilda died, and, with her, the last shadow of feudal superiority passed from the walls and towers of Florence. Free the city had long been for every practical purpose, but now she was free not in action only but even in expression, and there it is her very Spirit that speaks, finding utterance in that "solemn, appalling and heart-shaking sound of Consul Romanus" which, heard even in an opium-dream, was the prelude to such splendours, and, as the title now actually bestowed by the City on her first fully acknowledged Magistrates, opened well a long history of conflict and of triumph. Government as evolved from Trade Guilds does not more exactly relate itself to the commercial substance at the root of Florentine life, than this title of Consul does to the great past where the Spirit of Florence still lived and from which it drew its strength. And if we are right in thinking with Santini, that this mighty name had been already in free use for the heads of any and every Italian organisation, we may surely suppose it first adopted by the Trade Guilds to distinguish their office-bearers, and thence passing easily to the greater Consuls that ruled the commonwealth : a new sign, then, that Substance and Spirit were at one in producing the form, and even the characteristic names of the Florentine State.

We are now arrived at the twelfth century, the age when definite documentary evidence first becomes widely available in reconstructing the history of Florence. Let us see then what was the form of the civic community which had already drawn so many of her country neighbours within her walls. The material plan of Florence was still very much that of a Roman town : a square lying somewhat obliquely to the river,[1] defended by walls, towers, and moats, and divided in the large sense by two main streets which crossed at the central market-place and pierced the walls symmetrically, passing beneath the four gates of the Duomo, San Pancrazio,

[1] Because laid true to the cardinal points.

Sta. Maria and San Pietro, to North and West and South and East. These streets cut the city into tolerably equal quarters.

It is at least probable that originally the division of the great trades of Florence was also local, each having its seat in a distinct region, and even to-day some faint traces of this disposition still persist; in the grouping of the silk-merchants and goldsmiths in the Por' Santa Maria, and its extension the Ponte Vecchio, and the naming of streets after trades such as the Calimala, the Pellicceria, the Calzaiuoli and many others. But it is probably in vain that we attempt to recover the primitive arrangement, even in its larger lines; what is certain is that the twelfth century presents us at first with a local, and then with a functional form of government, each of which has an interest of its own.

The unit of the local government was the *Porta;* a sign that for administrative purposes city and country were not distinguished, for each Gate was the centre, and—marked by its beetling tower—as it were the *castle*, of a district which not only ran back along the main street to the market, and embraced its share of the network of *insulæ* and *vicoli* that radiated from it on either side, but stretched forward into the country as well, following the line of the same street, or road as we may call it since it has left the walls of Florence. The *Porta* was subdivided, in town and country, into *contrade* and *vicinanze*, and these again into houses and families. Each *Porta* elected three magistrates—the *Consules Portæ*—and these twelve representatives of the four Gates were the heads of the State in Florence.

It is probable, as we have said, that this local government originally corresponded to some primitive distribution of the trades, quarter by quarter, and that, could we recover it, the Consular Government of the twelfth century would appear for what it no doubt really was: the issue of Trade Councils meeting in a general civic Assembly. But passing this curious piece of antiquarian study, let us note what can be absolutely proved, the relation of the *Portæ* with their subdivisions to the ecclesiastical state of Florence, after the wonted manner of the time. Each Gate had not only a college of Consuls but a corporation of Clergy, among

Old Houses *from* Piazza dei Peruzzi

whom the *Abbas Portæ* had special functions as representative of the Bishop when a new clergyman was to be appointed to the cure of souls; for the ecclesiastical constitution of the *Porta* comprehended the diverse Parishes, and these the individual families of its district, just as its civil state included the subordinate *contrade* or *vicinanze*, and they in their turn the separate homes of the people. In Church matters the people had still much to say; for the fabric of their Parish Church was their property, and they elected freely, in normal cases, their Ministers of religion, who, as we have said, received institution, to the spirituality of their office alone, from the Bishop through his representative the Abbot of the *Porta*. So far we have found what is but a very natural coincidence of the two great organisations, sacred and secular, which covered the same ground; but in truth Church and State at Florence were so nearly allied as to appear what we have already called them: two related functions of the same body-politic. The Parish Churches served as the meeting-places of the *contrade* and *vicinanze* for civic purposes; the *Portæ*, which gathered them in four great groups, were called each by the name of an important ecclesiastical building—S. Pancrazio; Sta. Maria; San Pietro; San Giovanni—that served in like manner to shelter their larger assemblies; while the last-named Church belonged not only to its own *Porta*, but gathered the highest, the general, civic assembly under the twelve Consuls, just as, ecclesiastically, it was the Bishop's See and the one sacred Font of the city, the Pieve of Florence. Here then, where the tree of San Zanobi still stood, or had just been replaced by a memorial column, was the centre of the city's life and government, where all roads met, and where the countryman whom Florence had received and made a citizen, found himself in no strange city, but simply come to a freedom whose forms were already dear and familiar; the ancient communal life of the country in a new and more powerful development.

But the twelfth century is really a critical moment in the history of Florence, it looks forward as well as backward; not only perfecting the past but opening and preparing the future. To see how this was, we must leave the local government which stood on

a territorial basis and division, and consider for a moment that which was functional, and depended not on where men lived but on what they did; a widely differing set of conditions leading to far-reaching and unexpected results. We have already seen that the increase of population in the city was due, not merely to the movement thither of *contadini* who desired to escape from the thraldom of the Conti, but came to include the Conti themselves, as a kind of involuntary immigrants whom Florence had subdued and obliged to dwell within her walls. This change came as the result of warlike expeditions undertaken to set commerce free from toll, and on a warlike footing the city continued to stand, and even to rearrange her increased population as a preliminary to new enterprise. It is curious to note that the local Government of Florence depended ultimately on her primitive form as a Roman *Camp*,[1] and that the new constitution which was to supplant the other, though no longer local, stood upon a military basis and served its time as a useful engine of war.

The host of Florence in the twelfth century consisted of horse and foot; a natural division which made itself felt in the politics of the city. Notwithstanding the immigration of nobles from the country, class distinctions counted for nothing in the army; whoever could maintain a horse was drafted into the *milites*, as the cavalry were called; the rest served the state in the ranks of the *pedites*, or foot soldiers. Yet thus it necessarily happened that, in practice, the greater merchants of the Calimala joined with the immigrant nobility to form the *milites*, while the lesser trades or Arti furnished the *pedites*, so that the cavalry came to be aristocratic, and the infantry to express the force of the popular party. The army, in short, was the State grouped anew, not on a local but on a functional basis; a change which soon led to further development.

The cavalry were represented in the civic council by officers of their own with the title of *Consoli dei Militi*, the infantry on the

[1] This must not be taken *ad literam*. So far as can now be seen, the form of Roman Florence was civil, not military. But the lines of the *municipium* were probably only a modification of those used in the *castrum*.

other hand had no direct representation; their interests were attended to by the *Consoli* of the *Mercanti*, that is of Calimala. Here then was pretty material for civil war, under the pretext, not without justification, that a reform of the constitution was necessary. The minor trades, especially those of wool and silk, were growing strong, and were daily more jealous of the leading Guild; why, they asked, should we have to find our representatives not among ourselves but in the Calimala? And in the upper ranks of the army, among the *milites*, a party was already formed who saw and used their advantage in these popular discontents. The cavalry were divided between the Guelphic faction of the Merchants and the Ghibelline order of the immigrant nobles. As early as 1177, their opposing politics had issued in the discords and wars of the Towers, filling the streets of Florence with strife and death; now the Ghibellines saw their opportunity, they fomented the discontent of the Arti, and, joined by them, succeeded in overturning the Consular Government of the city.

The coming change is first seen in the Courts of Law. During the Consular period these had consisted of three classes of officials, the *Provisores* who kept procedure in touch with popular custom and sentiment; the *Judices* who acted as experts in Imperial Law; and finally the Consuls of the city, who sat to give the last civic sanction in judgment, and to provide for the execution of the sentence. At first, all the twelve Consuls had occupied the bench, but in 1181, we find that three only are elected to serve *super facto de justicie* for a single month. In 1184 the *Potestas* appears for the first time; as the Podestà, with growing powers, he occupies the place of the Consuls. The executive side of the civic authority is gathered by this new arrangement in the hands of one man, whom the city soon comes to choose from abroad (1201), and thus the revolution is complete. Florence is still a Republic, but has entered upon a new, a militant, form of development.

It is plain that the Government of the Podestà served admirably the needs of the army and of war, to which civic councils, where inexperience, division and compromise must needs reign, have never been favourable. Nor, with a little patience, should it be

difficult to discover how the new arrangement met the needs of Florence during the first half of the thirteenth century, and stood in a true and useful relation to her abiding Substance and Spirit. Substantially, Florence lived as a trading town, and the times were such that trade could only follow the flag: its routes and freedom must be maintained and extended by war. The *Contado* had been completely subdued in the fall of Semifonte (1202), but Pisa, Siena and Pistoia were still a further menace that called for new expeditions. And if the enterprise of these wider wars marked no change of policy but was still commercial, its instrument, the Host of Florence, was such as befitted the community it served; an army whose honours were not kept for any class but distributed on the basis of wealth—the sinews of war, the power to serve the State—its forces gathered and used at the command of an expert chosen from abroad, that no narrow Florentine interest or intrigue might disturb the calmness of his judgment. Depend upon it, the people did not grudge the Ghibellines their triumph, which, after all, was more apparent than real. Without the help of the *Arti* they had never unseated the Government of the Consuls. Under the new regime the Cambio, the Lana, the Arte of the Por' Santa Maria, and of the Notaries rose to share the power of the Calimala and hold a place in the Council, thus consolidating, and making effectual there, a great popular majority. Best of all, perhaps, was the association of the upper classes—the wealthy Merchants with the proud Nobility—in the ranks of the Militia. For here, moving to one enterprise, they learned to forget the feuds that had made the streets run red, and the Army of Florence, like that of Italy to-day, became the great organ of union. Every interval of peace was marked by marriages that fused the races, and—like that of Marcovaldo Guerra to Beatrice dei Conti Alberti (*c.* 1220)—made Guelphs of Ghibellines, against the further day when these differences of politics should all be forgotten. Substantially Florentine in its order and action, the Army not only reformed the State to purpose, but eminently served its informing Spirit as the chief agent of a new *civility*.

Not that this change was wrought at once, as in a fairy tale. As

the thirteenth century wore on it seemed indeed as if the Host were rather to be the cause of new trouble in the State. The very success of its operations against Siena, Pisa and Pistoia, sealed in 1235, while serving admirably the popular cause—always dependent on free trade-routes—naturally encouraged the Ghibelline party, who presently found, in the arrival of Frederic II (1235), the promise of new and powerful protection. The Emperor's son, Frederic of Antioch, came to Florence; the leading Guelphs, being the richer Merchants and those of the Nobility who had joined their party, went into exile; the Tosinghi Palace and the tower of the Guardamorto fell, so that, for a moment, it seemed as if the tradition of Florentine history was to be interrupted. For a moment only, since in 1250 the Emperor died, and the City saw the deep current of her true her popular life rise again to the light, affirming itself in the new constitution of the *Primo Popolo*, which gathered the Guelphs again from the Contado in a way that curiously recalls the movement of 1078. Plainly the City had done right in tolerating the Ghibelline Government of the Podestà, which, even now, she had no thought of displacing. Let but the Trades flourish in despite of foreign rivalry, as the late wars had taught them to do, and the people would take care of their own interests. The very suddenness of the change in 1250 shows what forces had been held on leash, and what a deep tide of popular life the late Ghibelline insolencies had at length set free.

The true significance of the *Primo Popolo* lies here, rather than in the particular forms the Magistracy now assumed. For the moment, it is enough to remember that the new representative of the people—the Capitano—did no more than balance the aristocratic power gathered still in the hands of the Podestà. Plainly the situation was not stable nor one that promised well. Were war to come, grave mischief might issue from these divided councils, nor could Florence fully flourish, even in peace, till some fairer solution of the political problem was arrived at.

The defeat of the Florentine arms at Montaperto in 1260 precipitated a new crisis in which the Capitano disappeared and the City came to be governed in the old form by a Podestà, acting

now in name of Manfred. But the Arts held on their wonted way, and even the renewed exile of the leading Guelphs turned rather to the ultimate advantage of that party. For these *Fuorusciti* went far; they turned their whole energies to business, and so, in France especially, opened new markets of which their native city was not slow to take advantage. Prosperity was in the air, and if money could help, the Guelphs were, in spite of their political reverse, still on the winning side, for wealth flowed to Florence as water to the sea. Thus the traditional Popolo became the *Popolo Grasso*, nor was it long till this commercial success had its formal political consequence.

Money in fact attained at this time a new importance, dependent on a change in the art of war. At Montaperto the victory of Siena, and of the Ghibellines, had been decided by a force of foreign horse: the German cavalry of Manfred, which, at a critical moment, turned the fortunes of the field. The force of the future lay then in the cavalry. But here the Ghibelline nobles, for all their tradition of knightly exercise, were only amateurs when confronted with the professional prowess of the true Soldier—the paid man-at-arms—who now for the first time makes his ominous appearance on the Italian field. It is he in truth that begins what the use of gunpowder is to complete; that change which supplants the old chivalry, setting war and politics alike on a new, a modern basis.

How this affected the Florence of the *Popolo Grasso* it should not be difficult to see. The weakness of the Government of 1250 had lain in part here that the cavalry command had naturally belonged, not to the Capitano but to the Podestà, the representative of the aristocratic party. With the coming of the hired soldier money became the sinews of war indeed, and any diffidence of the popular party must have tended to disappear as the new situation was realised. The people, rich and rapidly growing richer, were now independent of the aristocrats who had hitherto formed and guided the principal arm of war. They must have felt comfortably sure too, that even if growing trade withdrew them in a measure from service in the host, the wealth thus gained might be trusted

to provide infantry also at need, so as to give them, in any cause or field, the preponderance for which they were willing and able to pay. The law of supply and demand, in short, was sure to help Florence here as certainly as it had done in the field of Commerce itself.

Behold, then, the rise of a new Government, which is not new but simply the Florence we have come to know so well, relieved however from past preoccupations and from the weakness of compromise to secure her safety. The formal details of the *Secondo Popolo* need not detain us now. Be it enough to say here that the new Government was the truest and highest expression Florence ever found of her substantial life and developed Spirit; its basis laid in the seven *Arti Maggiori*, and its general form that of a Republic of Industry and Commerce, where nobility had come to be an actual disqualification for public life. The capital strength of the forces now at work is seen in this, that they were formative, not only in politics to the shaping of the new Government, but beyond, giving the State material expression in new architectural triumphs; gathering her people within the wider walls that now enclosed the City; housing her *Priori* magnificently in the Palazzo della Signoria; even decreeing the new Cathedral to express her traditional Guelphic policy.

In the fourteenth century the party feuds of the *Bianchi* and *Neri*, and the brief Tyranny of the Duke of Athens (1343), were but foam on the stream of the City's fuller life; the former hardly related to the reality of Florentine politics, the latter significant only since it grew out of the Commercial crisis of the day following on the straitened circumstances of the Acciaiuoli and Peruzzi, who had suffered in the great Bardi failure. The real question lay, as always, in the capacity of the Government to promote Florentine prosperity, and the deep difference and quarrel was not between the *Bianchi* and *Neri* as such, but between the Major and Minor Arts. Of these the former were in power, and formally since the constitution of the *Secondo Popolo*, the latter in opposition. The Government had what may be called an Imperial policy, and used its power to vote supply for conquests that should

open and keep free the ways of an ever wider commerce. The opposition on the other hand had the narrower views natural to their position. They were concerned in local trade; interested therefore in the prosperity and extravagant living of the Florentine nobility, their chief customers. Hence a growing sympathy, ending in a political alliance between the extremes of the social scale, by which the aristocrats hoped to strengthen their doubtful position in the State, and the minor artisans to win a recognised place in the Government, where they might control what seemed to them the waste of civic funds abroad. So, in 1353, we have an aristocratic reaction, led by the Ricci. Salvestro dei Medici joined this party in 1378, and in the following year matters took violent shape in the revolt of the *Ciompi*, when the minor artisans, under Michele di Lando the wool-comber, forced their way to the Government. This change was the logical consequence of the Constitution adopted a hundred years before.

The policy of the Major and Minor Arts, in their wider and narrower views, was so diverse as to be probably irreconcilable, and the attempt to unite these in a single Government had no more than a brief and formal success. Their differences gave unnatural importance to the aristocracy in Florence, and so prepared the way for that Tyranny under which her liberties finally fell. The prestige of the Government—that is of the Major Arts—was hard hit in 1423 by the defeat at Zagonara; the Albizzi who led the party lost the support of the Medici, now rising and studying to lead the opposition. The result was seen in the Catasto of 1427; a war tax which the Minor Arts carried and arranged so as to press heavily on the wider Commerce, and so on the party which they held responsible for the disastrous campaign. This was fatal indeed, and brought a discouragement from which the substantial interest of Florence never wholly recovered. Her life had lain in the Arti, and her death was due in great part to this blow blindly and heedlessly given in the house of her friends.

Henceforth the fates of the City are bound up with the Medicean fortunes, and we follow them still only so far as to note in one closing remark how strangely the conditions already studied seem

here repeated in a new and altered sense. In the early, the great days of Florence, her life was hid in the Trade Guilds, overlaid at first by alien feudal forms of Government; only occasionally declared, and so gradually developed till it reached full power, and what may be called final expression. Now, in the fifteenth century that life is failing, and the forms it had evolved persist only as the mask of something new that stirs beneath and surely prepares its own development and appearance. The Medici, then, are the heads of a new *Mafia;* about them the people gather, dazzled and seduced from their old allegiance. It matters not that the Signoria still sits, for the centre of power is no longer in the Palazzo Vecchio but in that of the Via Larga. Of still less consequence are the revivals of Republican forms in 1494 and 1527; their last contest with the new spirit and Tyranny. For the Medici have taken but too well the three steps of their triumphal progress, first subtly availing themselves of the forms of State to gain a position in which they might be independent of them; then despising what they still tolerated; and at last supplanting what they had corrupted. Their money, gained originally in Commerce, came finally to be invested in land, and so we leave Florence, not only fallen, but fast in the long-forgotten toils of a territorial tyranny. The new Mafia has triumphed over her ancient Liberties.

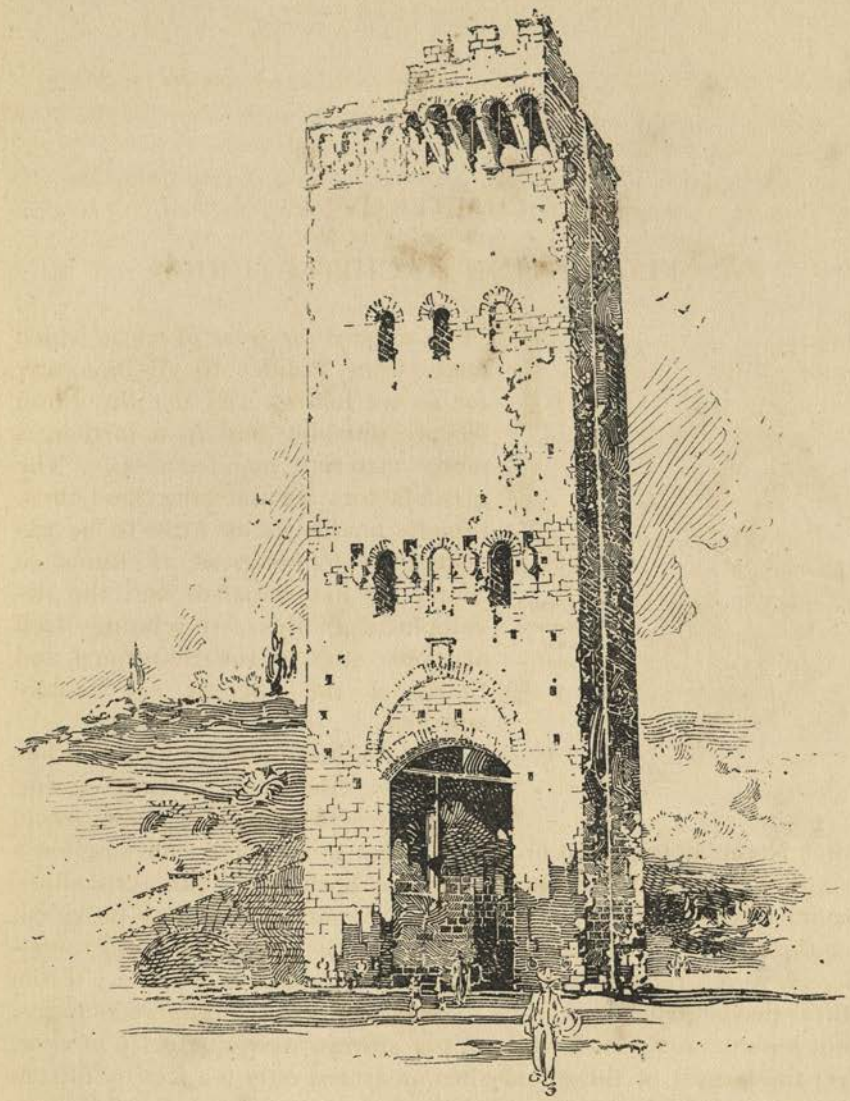
CHAPTER IV

FLORENTINE ARCHITECTURE

Detail from Palazzo Acciaiuoli in Borgo SS. Apostoli. The old machicolations have been cut down and roofed over.

IT is a natural progress of ideas which leads from Politics to Architecture, for as we follow, it is but the Form we are pursuing still in a further, a more material manifestation. The great factors are the same, and thus, though finality is as little to be expected in building as in forms of State, we may hope to find the development of this Art relating itself at every step to the Substance and Spirit of the City it so signally adorned.

The original building unit in Florence, as elsewhere in Italy during the early Middle Age, was the tower; that is the house built on the narrow foundation sufficient for a single small room, and added to, not horizontally but vertically—room above room—till the needed accommodation was provided, or the static possibilities exhausted. In the year 1209 four ground-leases were granted in the Borgo of Santa Maria Novella. From these deeds we find that while the lessees were bound to erect houses, not huts or sheds, and while upper storeys were distinctly in view, yet the largest of these four sites measured only ten feet by fifteen. It seems plain then that such houses could only have been towers; late examples of a fashion Florence had followed ever since she set herself to repair the damage and desolation of Barbarian times. Without following Lami in his opinion of the immense antiquity to



Porta San Niccolò

Note the great height & how the machicolations have been chiselled away

be assigned to these towers of Florence,[1] we may well note the examples to which he points, many of which are still visible, and may recall the fact that some of the towers taken down of late to clear the centre of the city, were found standing on masses of Roman *opus reticulatum*, and themselves showing signs of the most primitive mediæval construction. Such ancient houses may still be studied in the towers of the Via Lambertesca, the Via delle Terme, the Borgo Apostoli, the Borgo San Jacopo, the Via dei Giudei, and many another obscure and forgotten street of Florence.

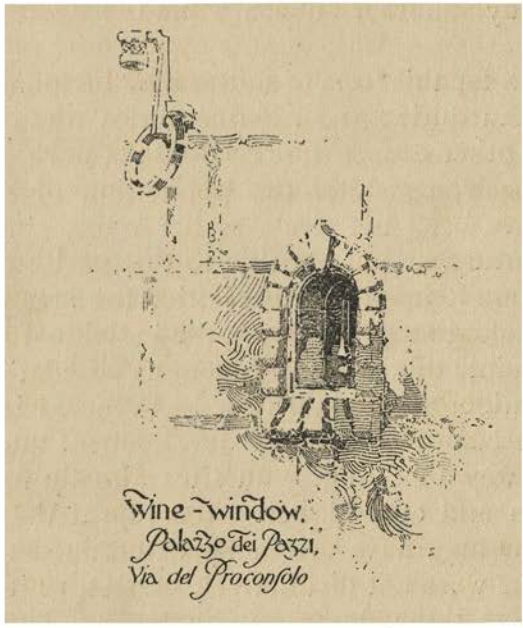
A natural reason for this form of house may be found in the need for defence common during the rude centuries when it prevailed. Yet, besides this, other causes were no doubt at work which deserve a passing notice. The smaller the population of Florence, the narrower must have been the circle of her walls, since that in its turn must have borne a just proportion to the garrison available for its defence. Hence a tendency to restrict the area of the town, which must have acted so as to reduce the individual house-sites to the narrowest possible dimensions. Then, as population grew, and as the relief of a wider wall could only be indulged in at considerable intervals, the standing mode of development must have been upwards; in the way of building on sites already fully occupied, but building high and ever higher. We repeat then, that while military conditions may have originally determined this form, the towers of Florence were not distinctively castles, as it has been the custom to represent them, but common houses, built on narrow sites because the whole city must be limited by a wall capable of defence at every point; which houses were then carried high to meet the wants of a growing population.

So far we have found nothing distinctively Florentine, for the tower as a house-form is found all over Tuscany, not to say Italy at large. But Architecture is everywhere the unstudied expression of national life and spirit in material forms, and a valuable witness to these just in proportion to its *ingenuity*. Let us call the Florentine Tower into court; we shall find that, in its arrangement and

[1] Prof. G. Lami, *Lezioni di Antichità Toscane*, Firenze, 1766, Vol. I, Lez. VI.

details, it corresponds singularly to the Substance and the Spirit of the City it composed.

The habits of the modern Florentine, formed on millenniums of ancestral experience, prepare us to believe that the ground-floor of the tower was not used for habitation, but that the dwelling-house lay in the upper storeys, removed from ground-damps and the noises of the street. To-day the ground-floors, even of great Palazzi still occupied by noble owners, are frequently let out as



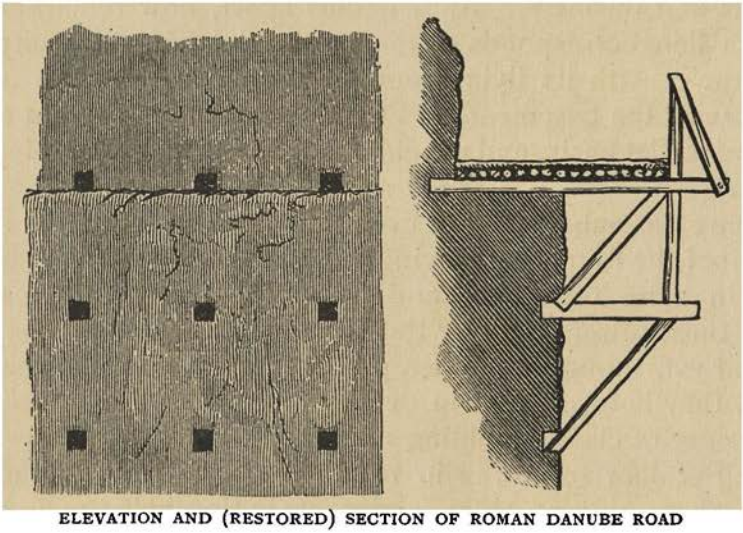
shops. Even where older conditions prevail, the tiny wine-windows, with their lists of prices, show that the tradition of the place has for ages assigned the ground-floor to the storage and sale of country produce. We may believe that it was so from the beginning, and that in the days of commercial prosperity at Florence, the ground-floor of the Merchant's tower was his store, his shop, or at least the room where he kept his books, did his business, and interviewed his customers and clients. Health and convenience made such a habit natural, and that it was actually the Florentine custom is indicated by all that we observe of the structure of these basements

themselves. They are generally higher than the storeys that follow above, with lofty arched doorways to allow the passage of laden beasts, and even carts. A massive vault divides them from the upper storeys, even when these are only separated from each other by floors resting on wooden baulks. There are also traces of division in some of these basements, suggesting that they were frequently separated horizontally by a wooden half-floor at the vault springing, so as to provide an *apotheca* or store for goods in the upper part, reached by a ladder, while the lower was left free for books and business. And, details apart, how remarkably the main fact here corresponds to the substantial life of the city itself. As the tower with its living-rooms rose above the shop or store which formed the basement, so Florence was founded from the first on a commercial basis, and developed her life with the developments of trade.

Not only the Substance but even the Spirit of Florence may, in like manner, be found embodying itself in these primitive constructions. In spite of what Lami has said, there is no reason to suppose these towers built by the Romans, still less by the Etruscans, and yet, though not older, probably, than, at most, the eighth century, they hold, in certain details of construction, more than a reminiscence of classic building methods. Here and there—at the springing of door-arches, or in rows across the front of the upper storeys—these towers show series of putlog-holes over massive cushion brackets ; simple corbels where they fall under the holes, or, more rarely, hook-shaped where they stand alone above the windows on the wall. Such holes and corbels were the means of fitting and supporting movable wooden balconies or hoardings, which rested on beams and struts below, and were covered above by pent-house roofs from a wall-beam held by the upper row of stone hooks. These galleries were contrived for the lower storeys as an airy escape from the dark and narrow tower-rooms—one of these only, remember, on each storey—and above, at the tower top, as a ready vantage for defence. Thus, in peace, and especially on days of *festa*, the towers hung out rich stuffs of Florence, or eastern carpets, from their galleries ; filled these with youth and

beauty, and so made the dark streets bloom like a garden of flowers. Or, again, at the summons of war, all was changed as if by magic; the towers stripped for action like fighting ships of the line, taking in the lower galleries till the grim walls stood bare, their narrow windows closed, and only above, far out of reach, a single projecting battlement, piled with stones and filled with crossbowmen, frowned upon the street without a beam or ledge to aid a scaling party, or break the sheer fall of its deadly artillery.

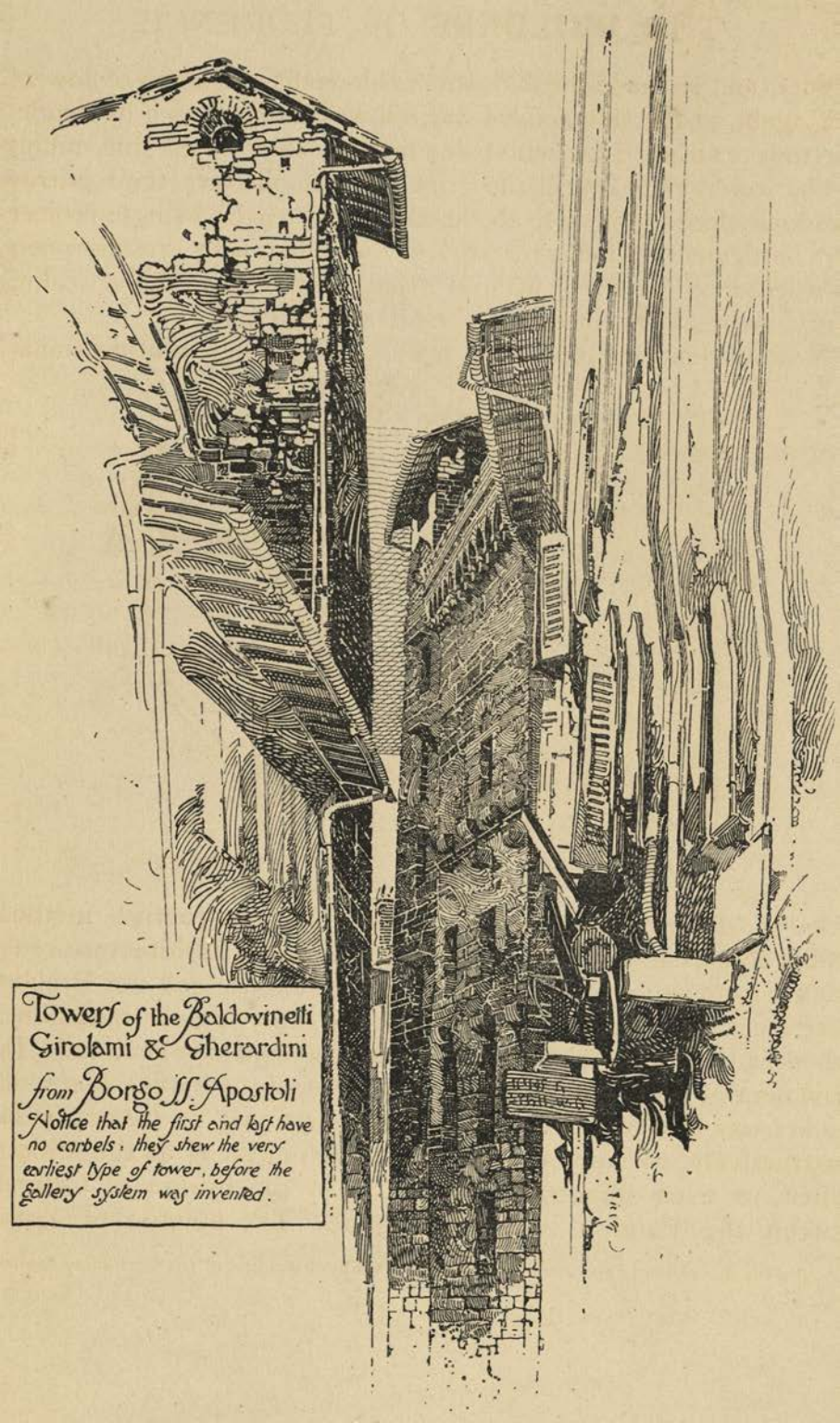
Now all this garniture of the tower—its feasting fighting frame-



ELEVATION AND (RESTORED) SECTION OF ROMAN DANUBE ROAD

work—is distinctly Roman; a copy of constructive methods familiar in classic building. We may call it the Architecture of the Bracket from its most distinctive feature; and indeed the Bracket, as we meet it in these Florentine towers, was no new invention, it had already a long history of varied use and application. The equivalent of the column capital,[1] as the Arch of Titus shows, the bracket was freely used by the Romans, not only in decoration but constructively, to carry *moeniana*, or balconies, as at the Villa of Sallust, or even important arches, as in the bridge of Caligula between the Palatine and the Capitol. The column of Trajan

[1] *cf.* also the derivation of the word corbel, and the traditional origin of the Corinthian capital.



Towers of the Baldovinetti Girolami & Gherardini from Borgo SS. Apostoli

Notice that the first and last have no corbels: they shew the very earliest type of tower, before the Gallery system was invented.

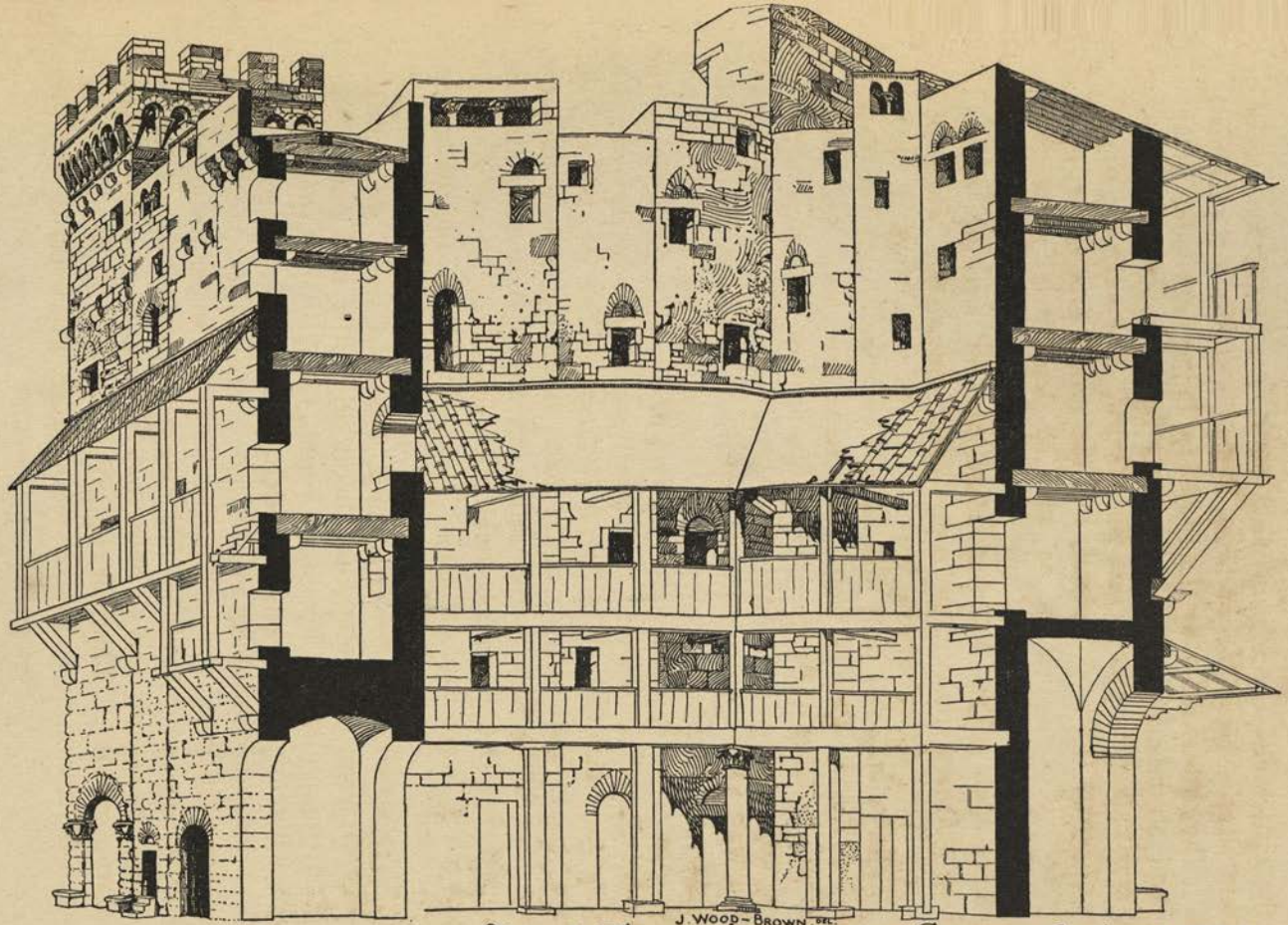
shows watch-towers with platforms supported on this principle, and, most interesting of all for our present purpose, the rocks of the Danube still bear traces, showing how that emperor used putlogs and struts of wood to carry his military road round awkward corners where the cliff offered no natural footing. The rock at such points shows a triple row of deeply cut holes; the uppermost lying along the inner side of a shallow shelf cut in the cliff. These received the ends of long beams, resting partly on the shelf, and partly projecting beyond it to give breadth to the path. The outer ends of the beams were supported by a double system of struts, one over the other, which found their bearings in the lower rows of holes, just as the gallery struts did in the faces of the Florentine towers. Nor is this correspondence a case of imitation, for it would be absurd to suppose that mediæval Tuscan builders had gone as far as the Danube for their model. It is, in fact, something much more interesting, the direct uninterrupted survival and succession of Roman constructive methods. Remember that the age which separated the old world from the new was an age of war, when military constructions were almost constantly called for. These then were the bridge, so to call it, by which classic practice reached later times and continued itself through the Middle Ages. If, then, there were any direct unbroken survivals of such practice, we should expect to find them in the application of military devices to civil architecture. And this is just what we do see in the galleries of the Florentine towers, not to speak of the whole system of bracket-building thence derived. Presently we shall come to notice some of the chief features of that development, but for the moment it is enough to remark that the classic Spirit of Florence was as surely represented in the garniture of her towers, as her substantial life by the use she made of the tower basements as places of business. Florentine Architecture, as seen in these towers, was the material form which expressed, in stone and wood respectively, alike the Substance of the City and the Spirit of the race.

As yet we have considered the tower only as a unit, now let us see something of the building-groups to which it gave rise. Out-

side the city walls, the towers were built as we have seen them at Santa Maria Novella; in lines determined by the principal roads. They stood close by the roadside, lining both sides of the road, and so facing each other across the thoroughfare. This group was called, in every case, the *Borgo*. Not only the single towers of which it was composed, but the group as a whole, held such possibilities of defence as well to deserve its name; recalling as it did the nature of the country *castello* from which the inhabitants had migrated: that more ancient strength whose principal features they thus reproduced under the walls of Florence. The Santa Maria Novella leases show that in such a *Borgo* the towers not only formed a continuous wall, but that, behind, on the side away from the street, they were built either without windows or with *spiracula* only, narrow openings not more than a span in breadth. Citywards the *Borgo* joined its towers to the town wall at the gate, while towards the country, if need were, a stout pair of chains, stretched between rings set in the last pair of opposite towers, effectually barred the way. Sometimes the *Borgo* was closed at this end by a final gate-tower of its own, thus becoming an *antiporta* or outlying defence of the city itself. As Florence grew from age to age, circle beyond circle, each new *enceinte* rose on a line many points in which had been already determined by the external defensible limits of these *Borghi*, that stretched into the country from each gate in the older walls.

Within the city, the tower group arranged itself differently. Florence, we must remember, had been originally laid out on the lines of a Roman camp.[1] Two main roads, then, divided the ground into somewhat unequal quarters, which, in their turn, were broken up into rectangular building plots by the lines of the lesser streets. In the reoccupation of the city under the Lombards, these *insulæ* were appropriated by families and clans, who naturally chose to live in neighbourhood, and so built their towers side by side about the common ground. Thus on each *insula* rose a *dado* of towers, the homes of relations and partisans. Here, however, it was the

[1] See, however, note to p. 62.



Ideal Florentine Tower-Group *previous* to 1250

In Via delle Terme: Giudi, Carducci & Buondelmonti Towers
Notice the bold half-arch contrived to carry building over a lane now closed.

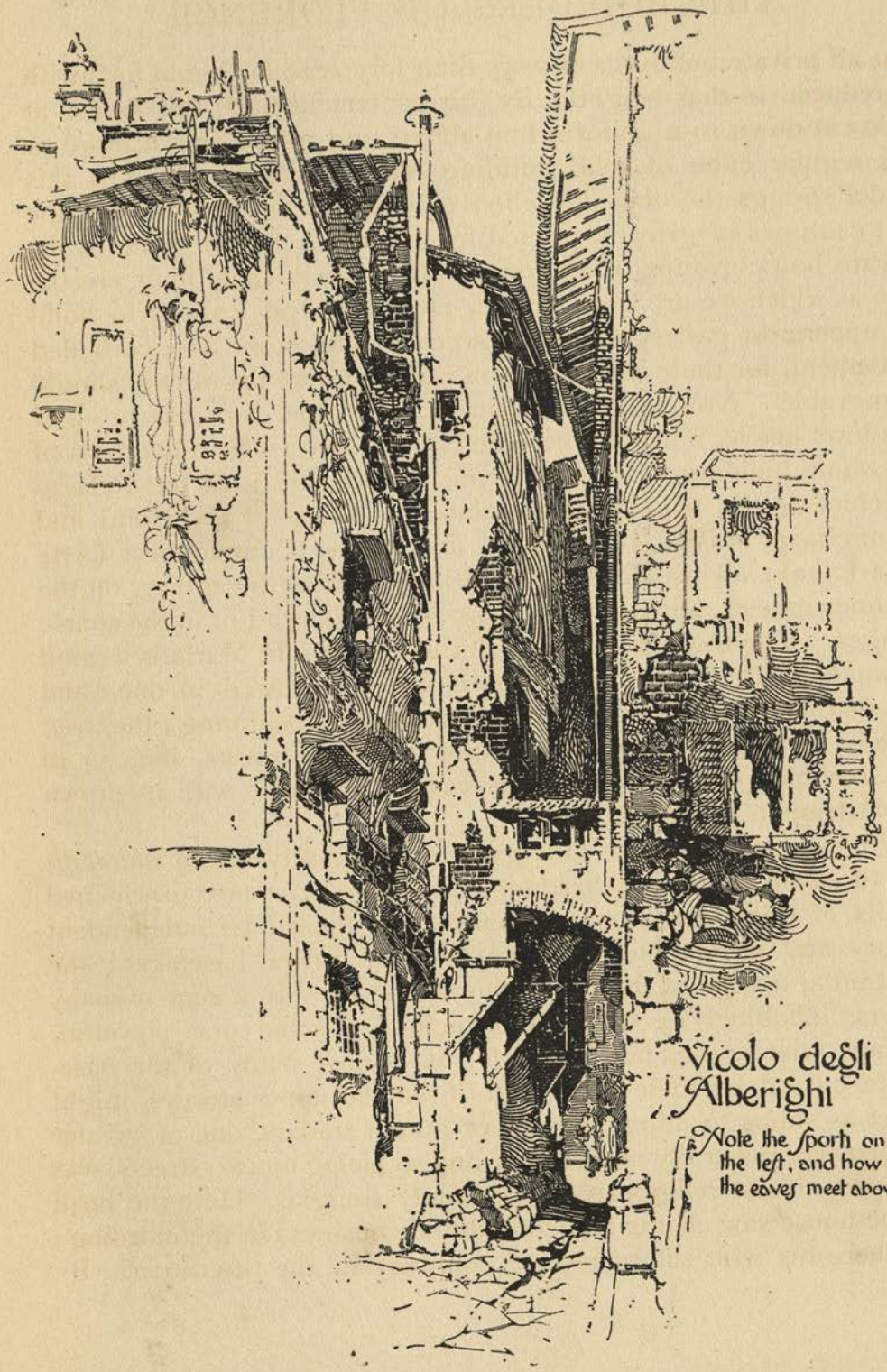
four street faces of the group that must study defence; for what it enclosed was no longer the road, as in the *Borgo*, but that private ground which the towers girt in on all sides. This free heart of the *insula* had always its common well, and sometimes its chapel too; marking, this last, in a most interesting way, the transition from primitive worship in private houses—as of Apostolic times—to the religious association of neighbours bound by ties of blood and policy in the early parishes of Florence.

It is not difficult to realise some of the effects of time upon the architectural group of the *dado*. Population went on increasing, and in these blocks the towers rose ever higher, in a fine unstudied irregularity born of the differing needs and resources of each family. Men died in Florence then as they die to-day; families went down, sales of property took place; each with some result on the primitive *insulæ* as growth and decay combined to modify the original house-groups. On the one hand, arches were thrown across gaps left between towers for access to well and chapel, and over these arches new towers built, that vied with the old, and made the *dado* more than ever a close block of building. Examples of this may be seen at the east end of the Via delle Terme, or midway in the east side of the Via dei Cerchi. On the other hand, new *vicoli* pushed their way across the *insulæ* as the result of sales, and with the purpose of separating neighbours of alien blood and opposite policy. These *vicoli* offered new street fronts, which were again built on; with the result that the spaces once open in the hearts of the *dadi* were more and more broken up and lost. Thus a thousand unforeseen and unstudied circumstances imparted to the city that charming irregularity which still delights us, and from which only with difficulty and by patient study can its original arrangement be even in part recovered.

Hitherto we have spoken of the times preceding the middle of the thirteenth century, but that period closes with a crisis; the *Arti* are rising, and with the new political development of the *Primo Popolo* a change appears which is to transform the earlier *dado* into the well-known Palazzo of later times. The crisis was precipitated by a law of 1250 which, to humble the Ghibelline nobles, decreed

that all private buildings of more than fifty *braccia* should forthwith be reduced to that height. By this enactment then, the *dado* is at once cut down to a uniform line above, and now forms a more or less regular cube of solid building about a courtyard. On this model springs the new Bargello; reaching at once the very shape that centuries of growth, pruned by the late Act, had given to the private house-groups of Florence. It is likely that, long ere the time at which we are now arrived, architects had learned to build the uppermost gallery of their towers in solid stone as a corbelled battlement, for there was no reason why that, like the others, should be movable. Now such a battlement, when the *dado* was brought to a level above, naturally became continuous, as the due crown of the whole building in its new form. So we find it in the Palazzo Vecchio, and in such private palaces as those of the Spini and Gianfigliazzi in Via Tornabuoni, and of the Compiobbesi (Arte della Lana); all which rose in the later thirteenth century, on the old lines indeed, but reaching these at once instead of in the course of ages. The tower of the Amidei in Por' Santa Maria is a good example of the double house—as it were two towers in one—and so a distinct step towards what we have been considering; the case, namely, of those palaces where, not a pair of towers, but, so to say, a whole quadrangle of them was built at once with its crown of battlements complete.

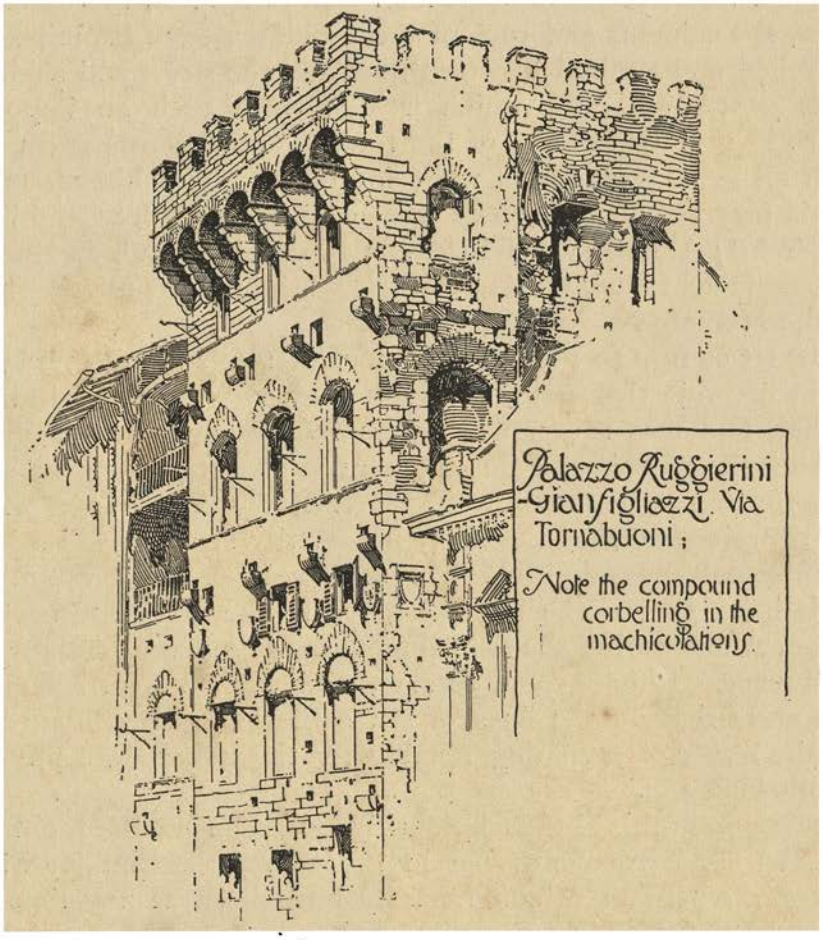
While the towers were thus grouping themselves into the *dadi*, and the *dado* in its turn becoming the *palazzo*, even the principal details of this domestic architecture had their own independent history and development. Take first the tower basement; the substantial *bottega* of the Florentine merchant. In a *dado* of many towers, inhabited by different branches of some one powerful, perhaps aristocratic, family, while, as to-day, many of the basements, cut off by their solid vaults from the upper storeys, might be let as shops to minor artisans or poorer traders, one of greater importance, generally at a corner, and so facing on two streets, was set apart almost religiously as the family Loggia. Here the head of the house saw clients and contadini on business in the morning; and here his wife sat to receive company in the afternoon. By



Vicolo degli Alberighi

Note the sporti on the left, and how the eaves meet above

degrees, where there was space available, pillars were set in front of the corner, and a wide roof stretched over them which found a bracketed bearing on the tower wall above or beside the great door-arches of the basement. Thus the Loggia grew by encroach-

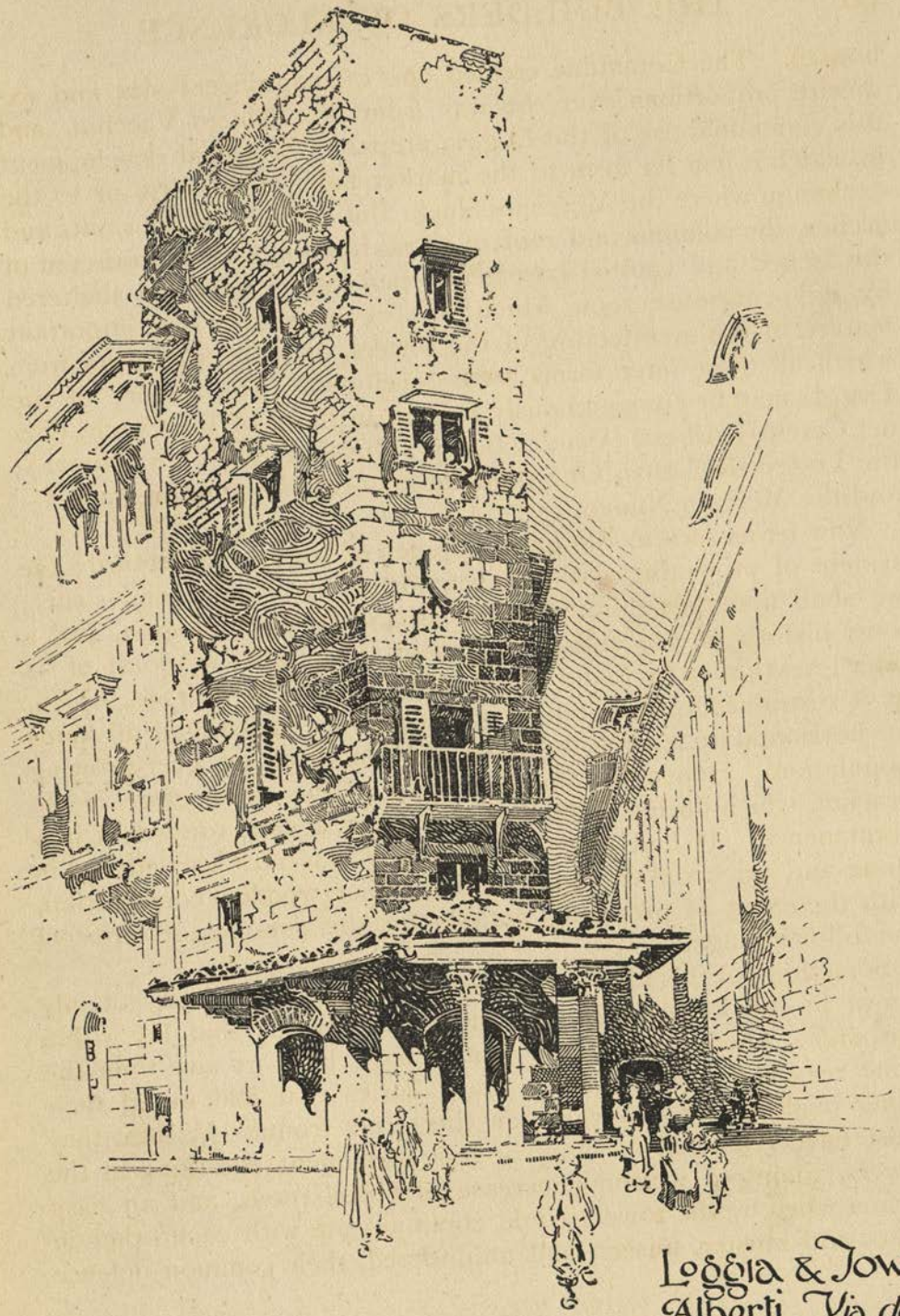


ing on the street; where the lines of its new roof and columns made a charming effect, as any one may see at the Canto degli Alberti in Via dei Benci. Then the great and wealthy, who had plenty of ground at their disposal, began to build *loggie* as independent structures; sometimes on the opposite side of the street from their

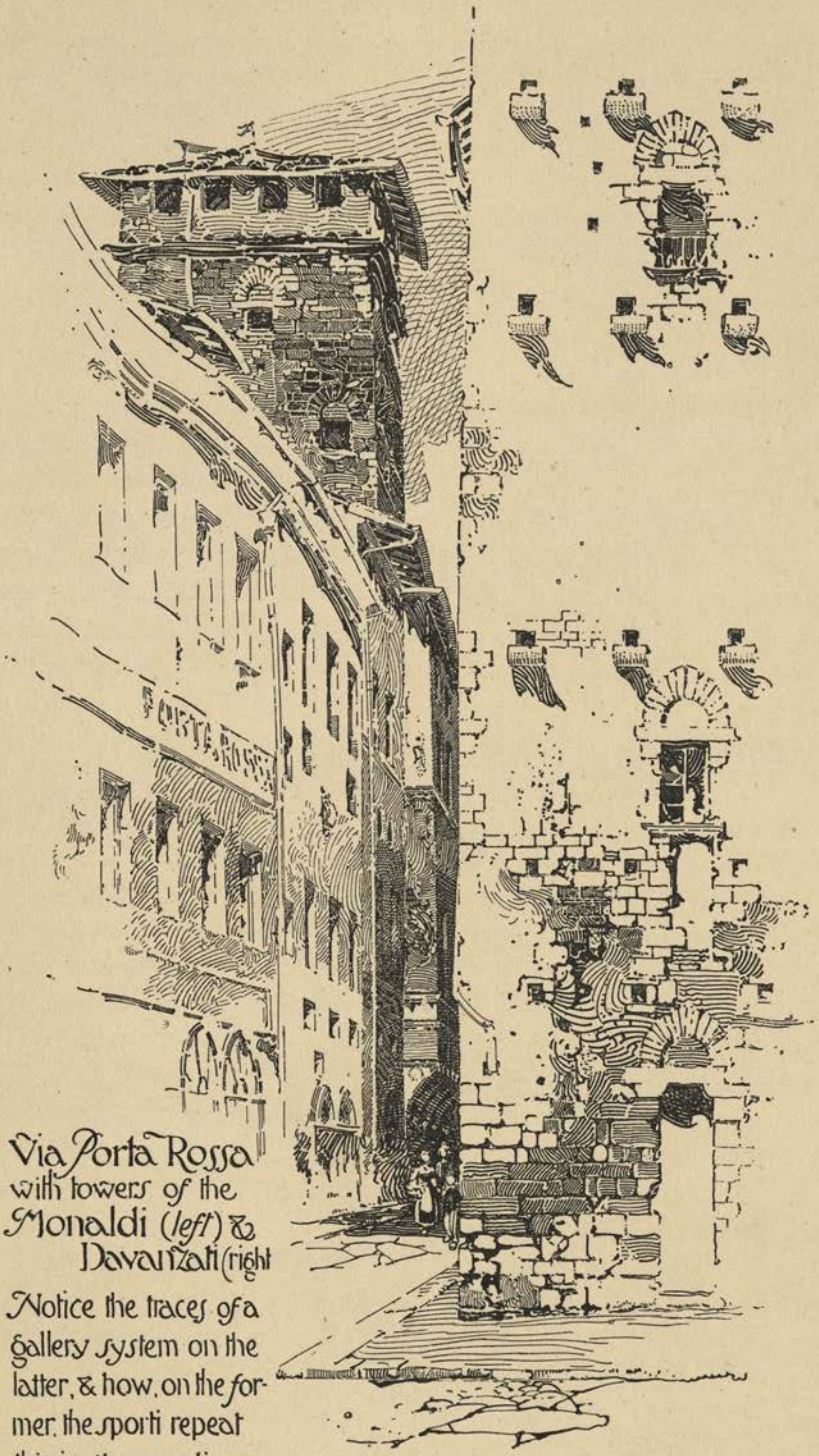
houses. The Commune erected one of magnificent size and exquisite proportions over the way from the Palazzo Vecchio, and this communal use of the Loggia prepared for a final development in which it lent its form to the market halls of the city, or to the exchange where the Merchants met. But to the last, the vaults and arches, the columns and roof of these buildings are reminiscent of the arched and vaulted basement, open to the street and sheltered by its pent-house roof, which was at once such an important feature in the architecture of the towers, and the true germ from which all these later forms were developed. The history of the Loggia may be compendiously studied in those of the Cerchi (Via dei Cerchi); Alberti (Via dei Benci); Rucellai (Via Vigna Nuova); the Loggia dei Lanzi, Or San Michele—originally a grain market—and the Mercato Nuovo.

Now let us turn to the great adjunct of tower architecture; the system of projecting galleries, supported by brackets and struts; we shall find that this, no less than the basement loggia, had a long history of use and development. The starting-point of its later growth may be found in the effect of the law of 1250, which, as it restrained vertical building, necessarily encouraged all kinds of horizontal extension to meet the wants of an ever-growing population. Hence the impulse given to the architecture of the bracket, which during the following century tended towards a new permanence. It had come to stay, and was now carried out in stone and brick on the lines of the earlier wooden construction, with the result of preparing notably for the new palace forms of the following age.

Something of this kind had probably long been practised, not only above in the battlements, but in the courtyards that lay within the *dadi;* where there could hardly have been at any time the same reason for taking down the galleries that had urged their being made easily removable on the street fronts. Within, they must have remained as more or less permanent additions to the towers, giving a welcome increase of house room, and an easy means whereby the towers could communicate with each other in peace and muster, unseen and unhindered, their common defence



Loggia & Tower of the Alberti, Via dei Benci



Via Porta Rossa
with towers of the
Monaldi (*left*) &
Davanzati (right

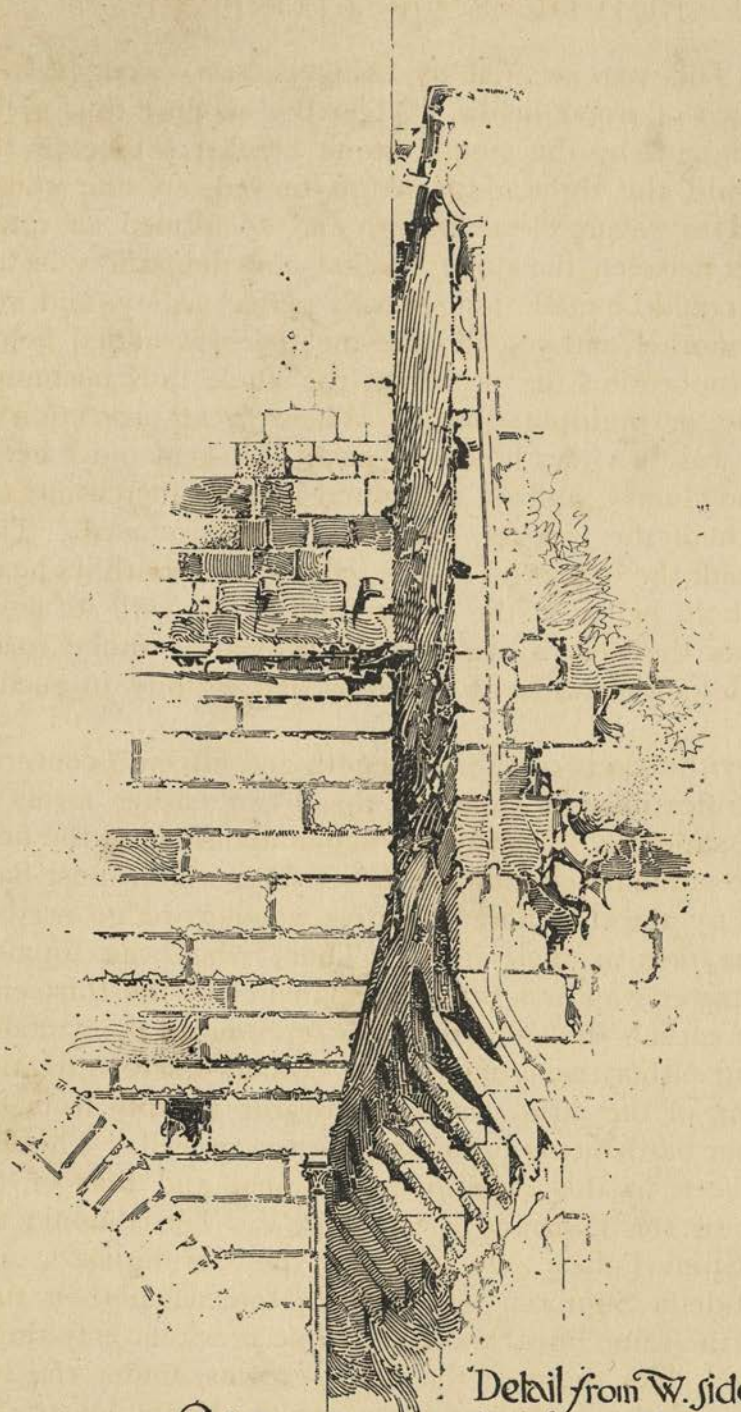
Notice the traces of a gallery system on the latter, & how, on the former, the sporti repeat this in stone & lime.

in war. In the fourteenth century the worst of the street fighting was past, the population was growing in peace, yet the houses might not be built higher, nor could they advance in the sense of standing farther forward on the soil of the street. Only one resource, then, was left, and now, what had probably been the earlier practice in the courtyards, came to be transferred to the outside of the house blocks; that is, their galleries, hitherto wooden and removable, were bracketed out at the level of the first floor in solid stone, arched between the brackets, and carried up to the roof in brick or half timber as a permanent addition to the house; so that Florence soon became a city of *sporti*, as these projections were called. A good example of the new building style may be studied in Via Porta Rossa, in the Palazzo of the Monaldi (more recently Torrigiani), now the Porta Rossa Hotel. Low and heavy stone brackets carry a wide projecting front several storeys in height, while behind stands a massive and lofty tower, part of the original fabric to which—probably in the sixteenth century—these *sporti* were attached. This example is all the more remarkable since, directly opposite, may be seen another group of towers—those of the Davanzati—severely plain in the style of the early thirteenth century, yet showing, in their putlog-holes and simple cushion brackets, the clear sign of that system of wooden galleries from which the later *sporti* on the other side of the street were derived. Close at hand, in the Palazzo Davanzati, we have a house of the fourteenth century; intermediate therefore in type between those just cited. The street front here is plain, the *cortile* shows three tiers of permanent galleries on wooden brackets, and over the western vicolo—now closed—the palace begins timidly to throw a new profile, set on shallow stone *sporti* that spring from a dainty carved colonnette at the angle: it is the commencement of the new age in house architecture.

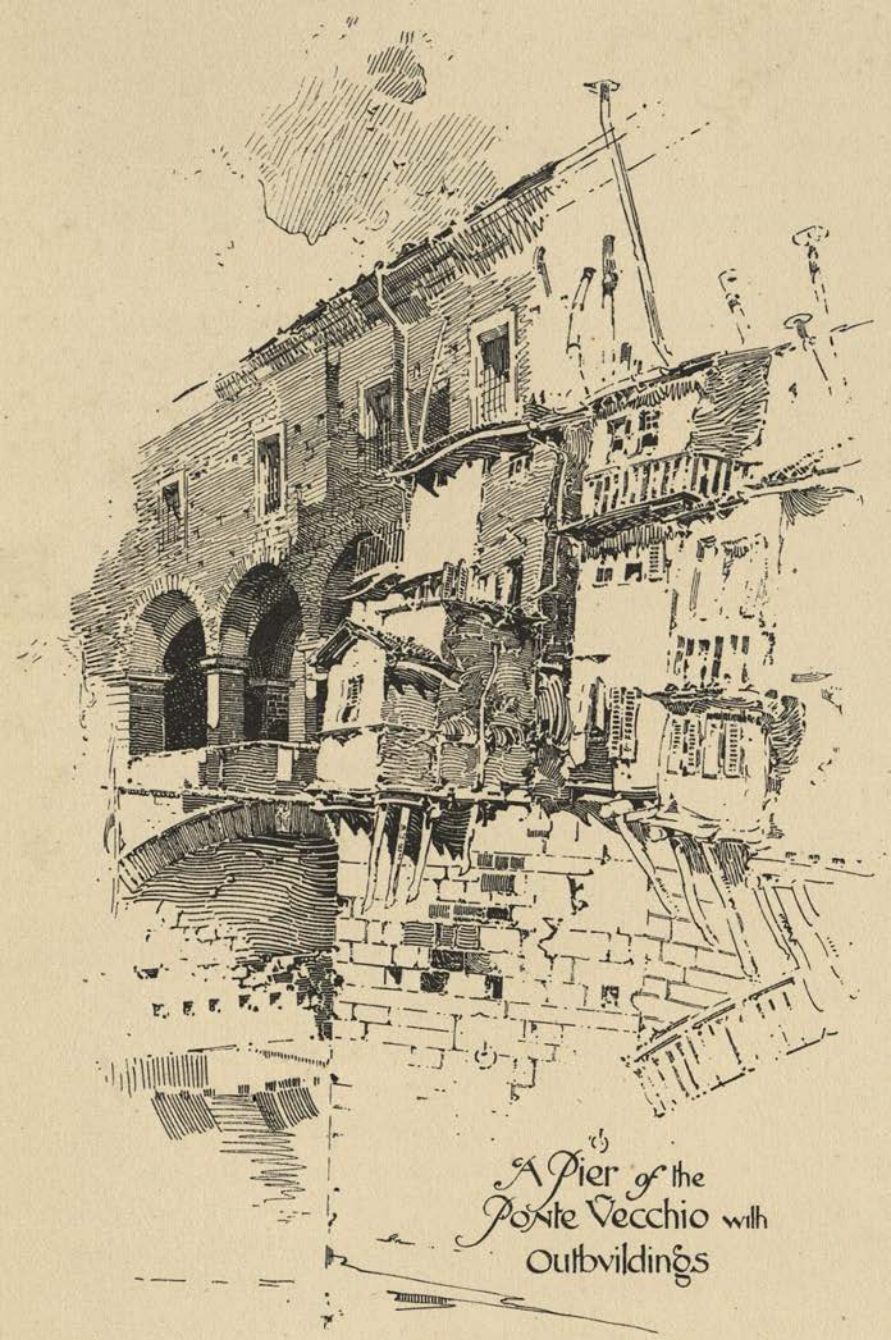
In all this building the bracket is, of course, the vital, the functional element, and will fully repay a somewhat closer study. From the beginning, as used in the early wooden galleries, it had two forms which we may call those of the *corbel* and the *strut*. At first a simple putlog-hole in the tower wall received the end of the

gallery beam. This was secured by being *calzata*—wedged in—by a shorter piece of wood below. Then the support thus given was made permanent by the simple stone bracket set below the putlog-hole, while the tightening wedge moved up one stage, being still used to secure close fitting, and so formed an intermediate member between the stone bracket and the gallery beam. Thus the beam could be made longer with perfect safety, and still lengthened as another and yet another member was added below in increasing proportion; the profile of the whole thus becoming that of a triple or multiple corbel. Where great projection of heavy galleries was in view, however, such a system must needs have become too clumsy, and so, to lighten it while increasing the bearing strength of the bracket, the strut was introduced. This slanting prop took the outer end of the gallery beam with its head, and found foothold below at the lower putlog-hole with its stone bracket. It was the very system of the Roman Danube road; the best possible combination of lightness and rigidity in such a support.

Now the *sporti* brackets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are simply petrifications in stone of these two earlier forms of wooden gallery supports. The process began almost from the first, with the simple stone bracket on the tower face, which must have been suggested by the still more primitive wooden wedge used to hold the beams fast in their holes. Then, when the topmost gallery at the tower roof was made permanent—in the thirteenth century or even earlier—its stone brackets reproduced their models exactly, showing either the profile of the corbel—curve retreating under curve—or of the strut, slanting inwards sharply from the face of the upper battlements to that of the tower wall. The first form may be seen in the Palagio della Lana, and that of the Gianfigliazzi (now the Pensione Piccioli) in Via Tornabuoni; the latter in the Spini Palace just opposite the Gianfigliazzi, and in the Palazzo della Signoria. The *sporti*, too, when their time came, followed the same lines, and their stone brackets may therefore be classified, like those of the house-crowns, under the two dominant types of the corbel and the strut. Examples of the



Detail from W. side
of Palazzo Davanzati in Porta Rossa.



A Pier of the Ponte Vecchio with Outbvildings

Notice the peculiar vse of wood in the long double bracket & struts. It is as if part of a crannoge had been pulled up, piles & all, to be planted here, not in, but above the water on this coign

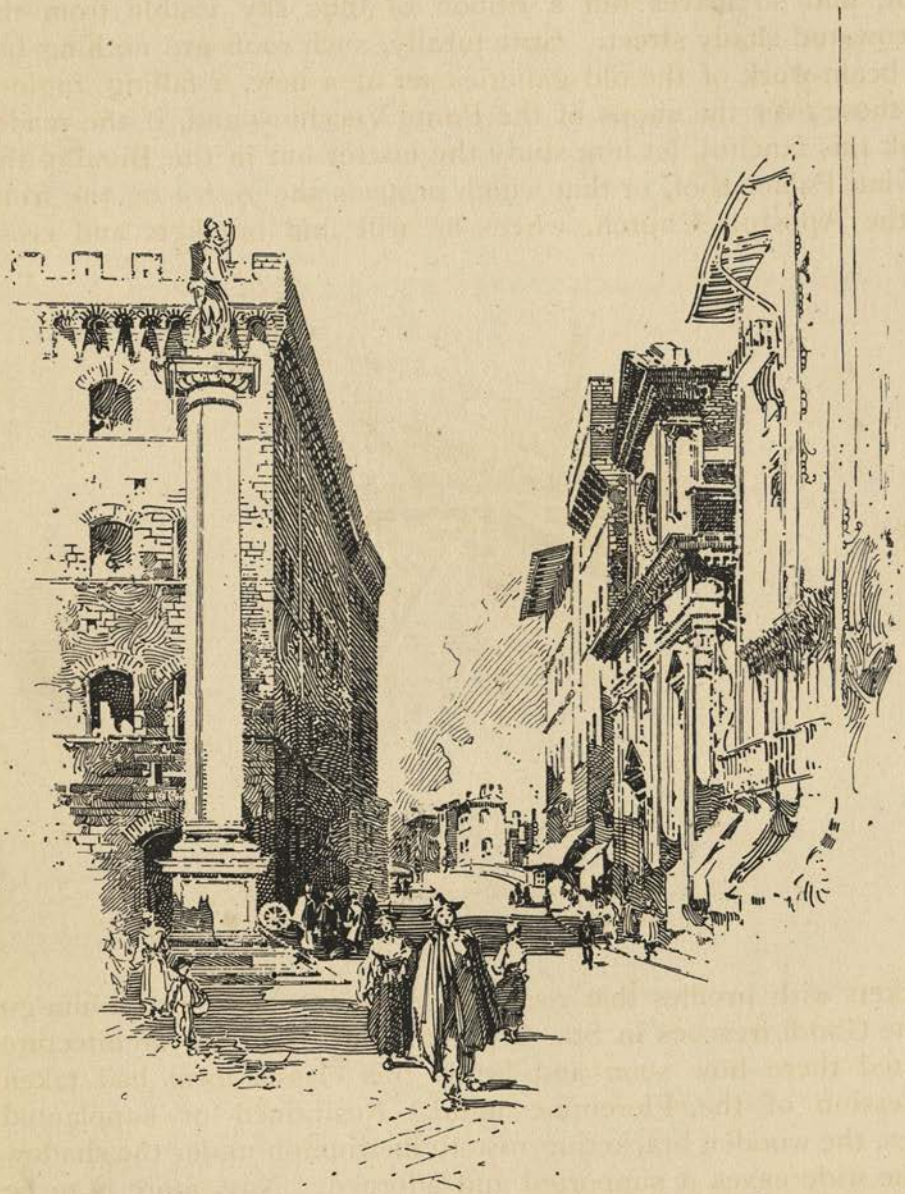
former may be found overhanging the Arno from the back of the houses in Borgo San Jacopo; in the Piazzetta degli Agli, or in the Chiasso Altoviti between the Lung' Arno and the Borgo Apostoli. The latter type is seen almost everywhere, but notably in the Quaratesi Palace of Borgognissanti, and the Palazzo Salviati in Via del Mercantino. It is curious to note that, as time went on, the brackets of these *sporti* rather gained than lost likeness to the wooden constructions that had suggested them. In the sixteenth century the strut no longer simply lends the line of its profile to a solid stone bracket, but shows its full form—a beam imitated in stone—at the south side of the Piazza Santa Croce; under Vasari's addition to the Palagio della Seta, and especially where he carried his gallery past the south end of the Ponte Vecchio. This last example is peculiarly instructive, for the obstacle is an ancient tower with putlog-holes and brackets complete, on which Vasari's stones fall almost exactly, as if they were the very struts of wood that in a strange coincidence they have replaced as well as reproduced. In the seventeenth century the *Baroque* lent its favourite form to these supports, which finally became curved in volutes, as we see them in the Palazzo Torrigiani of the Porta Rossa, or the Palazzo Ricasoli Zanchini (Hotel Nuova York) in Via Parione: it is the close of a varied history of growth and modification.

But it is time we cast our eyes upward to the tower tops, where changes were taking place no less remarkable than those which gave to the body of the Tuscan Palace its characteristic form. We have noted already the crown of battlements which the thirteenth century brought here to replace the unstudied irregularity of the towers, when, in 1250, the *dado* was cut down. The outbuilding of the *sporti* in the following age took the crown from all buildings to which it was applied, as the new front necessarily rose into that of the battlements so as to hide their picturesque projection. Something must be done above to recover what was thus lost, and, as it were, crown the house anew. Hence, then, the characteristic Florentine roof of the fifteenth and following centuries. It overhangs the *sporti* as these the basement line of the house

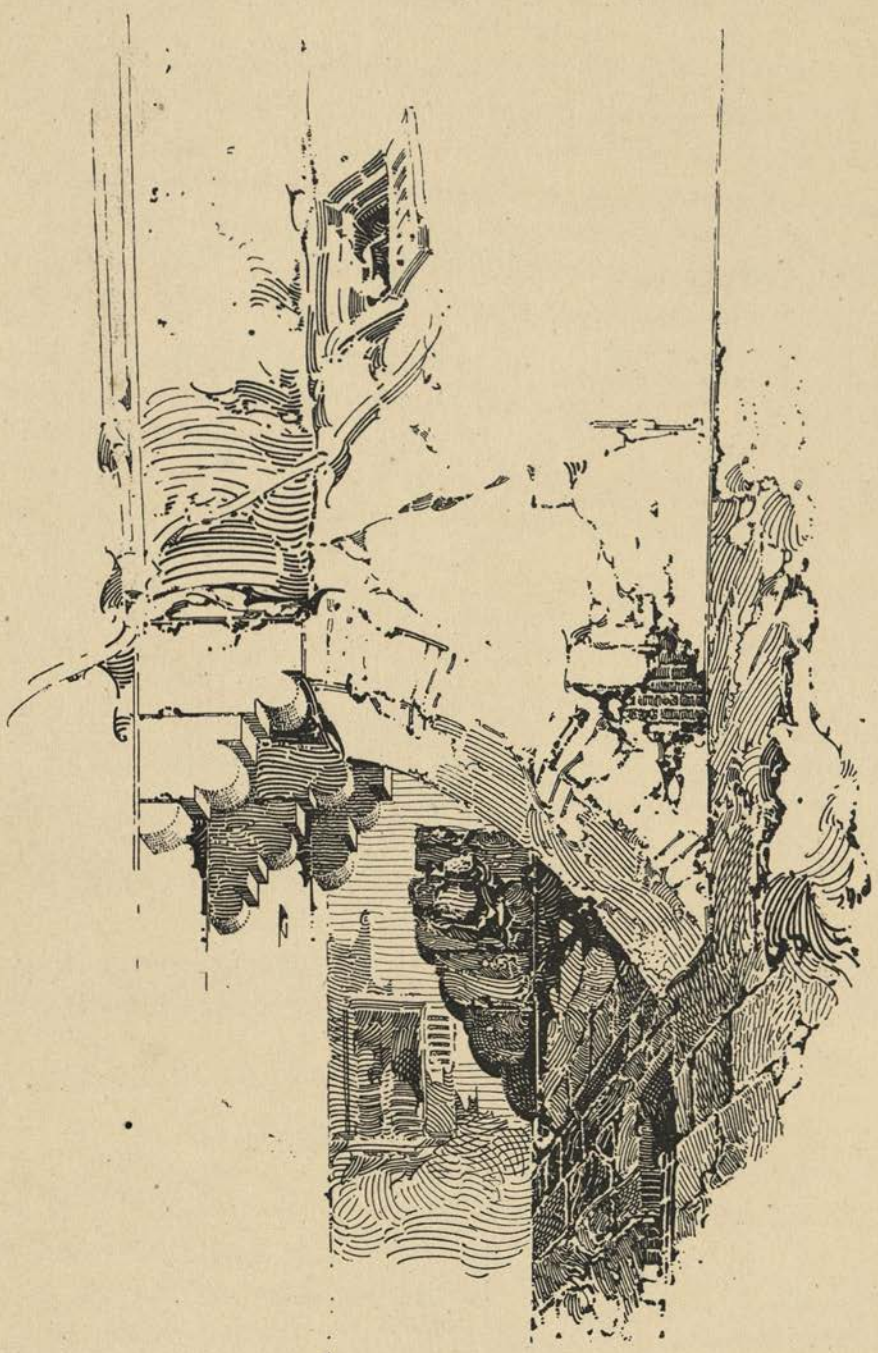
front, and so leaves but a ribbon of blue sky visible from the narrow and shady street. Structurally, such roofs are nothing but the beam-work of the old galleries set at a new, a falling angle—see those over the shops of the Ponte Vecchio—and, if the reader think this fanciful, let him study the matter out in the Bigallo, the Salviati Palace roof, or that which protects the *fresco* on the front of the Apostoli Church, where he will find brackets and cross

Detail of wooden bracketing over shops on Ponte Vecchio. Notice the droop in the heads, shewing how inclined eaves-brackets were derived from the straight put-log.

brackets with profiles that recall the earlier corbels; or let him go to the Gaddi frescoes in Sta. Croce to learn from the architecture painted there how soon and firmly this classic form had taken possession of the Florentine mind. Restrained or supplanted below, the wooden bracketing rose to its triumph under the shadow of the wide eaves it supported and adorned. Nay, more is to be said, for just here Florentine palace architecture developed a new and charming feature under its eaves. The bracket, as we saw in the beginning, is but the equivalent form of the capital, and



Via Tornabuoni, looking south, with Palazzi Spini-Ferroni (left) and Ruggierini-Gianfigliazzi (right)

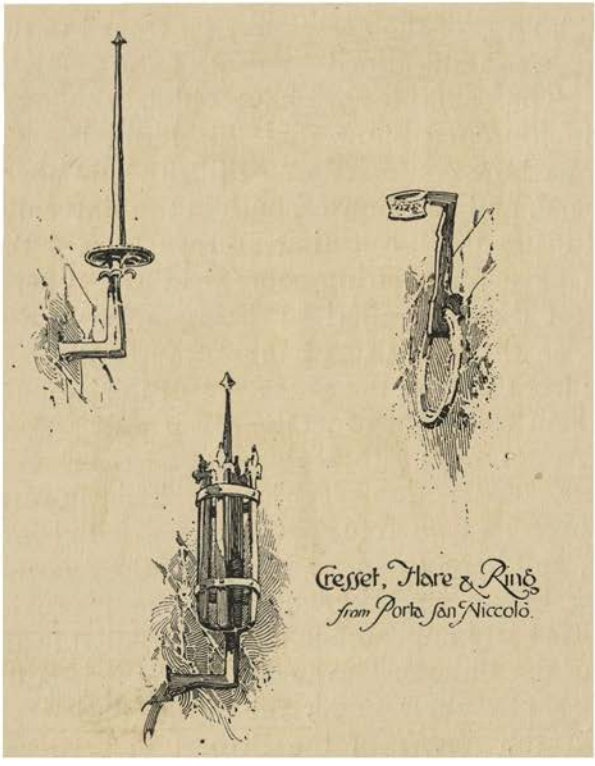


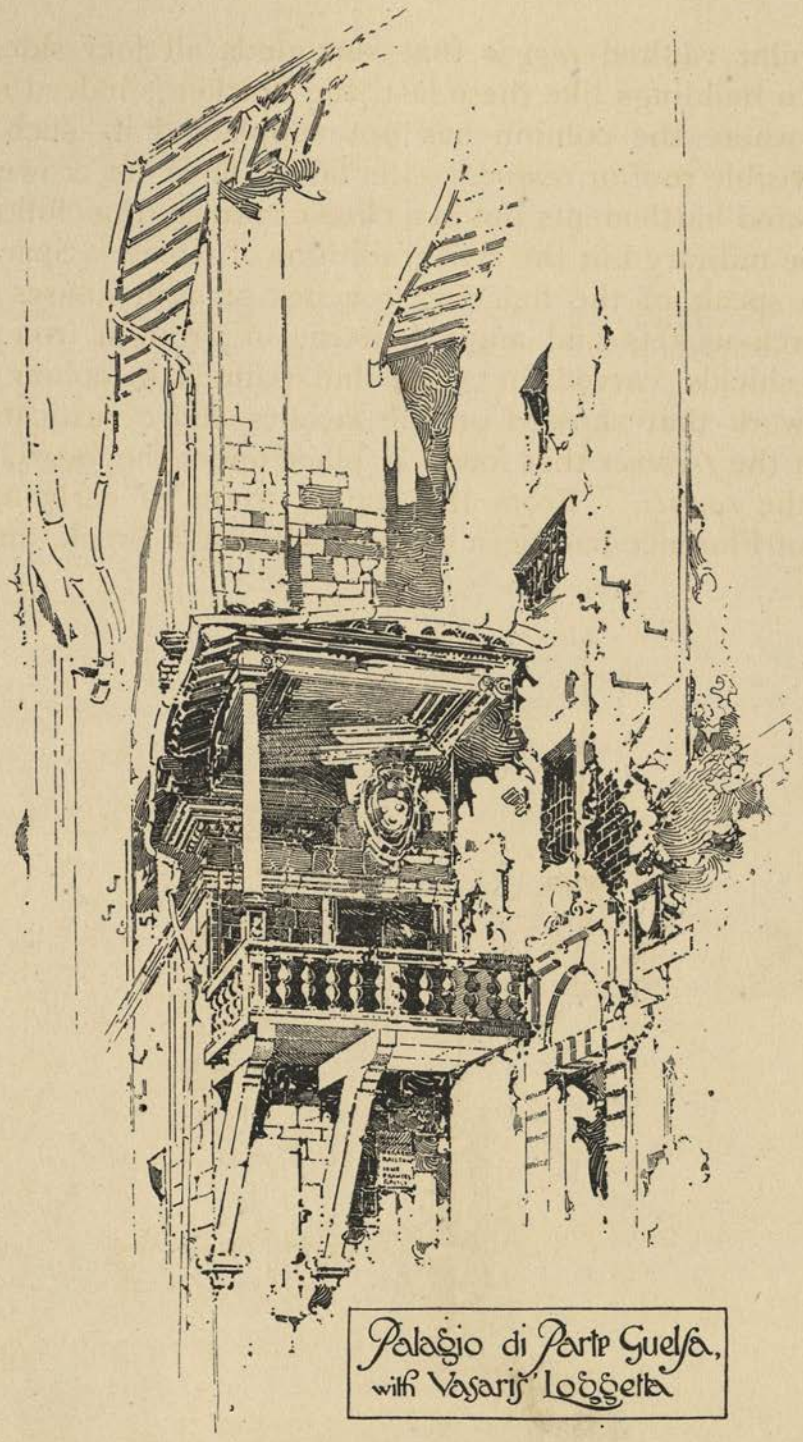
Corbels from
Chiasso degli Altoviti.

where the capital is the column cannot be far off. Now the carpentry of these roofs rested on the tower battlements, rested, that is, on the heads of the *merlons* which for the time played the part of pillars, while under it, and between the *merlons*, the *crenelles* opened at intervals into the space beneath the new roof and over that of the original tower. Thus the covered *terrazza* came into being, with its dark deep eyes that charm us so in their level glance from beneath the roof-brows. For the Renaissance, with its touch of revived classicism, soon gave actual and graceful stone pillars for the somewhat clumsy supports of the *merlons*. On these columns the roof rose higher, as an eyebrow lifts in wider glance, and so the *terrazza* reached its final perfection, as in that of the Canacci Palace which looks eastward over the Palagio della Seta and the Terme.

As the beginning of the *sporti* may be traced to the Act of 1250, so their close was determined by that of 1533 which decreed their demolition. The examples we have cited, with many others still to be seen in Florence, show that this latter law was never fully carried out, as how could it be? Still, the number of *sporti* was greatly reduced, and new houses, built in the sixteenth century, have plain fronts instead of projecting storeys toward the street. Yet these fronts have often string-courses at the different floor-levels which suggest the old galleries; being a survival either of their floor-beams, as these projected their outer ends in a moulded line through the front wall of the *sporti*, or of the stone moulding that supported them where they met the tower wall. And, in the palace courts, the Act of 1533 rather encouraged overhanging storeys by limiting their construction elsewhere. This inward extension of the palace over its own free space soon got beyond the power of the bracket, and here again, as above in the *terrazza*, its shadow, the column, began to take substance and provide a sufficient support. Its early appearance may be studied in the Bargello, or the *cortile* of the Palazzo Davanzati, where it is still irregular, and allows the use of corbels under the higher galleries; its glory will be found in the *cortili* of the Strozzi and Riccardi, where the Renaissance has brought these inner, upper storeys evenly to rest

on a regular vaulted *loggia* that surrounds all four sides of the court. In buildings like these last, the bracket is indeed no more, for even where the column has not supplanted it—such palaces have no visible roof or *terrazze*—the fabric finds its crown, not in machicolated battlements but in a classic cornice, thus following no longer the military but the civil traditions of Rome. Space would fail us to speak of the finishing touches of such houses: of the rings, torch-sockets and angle lanterns in wrought iron; of the heraldic shields carved in stone and painted in colour; of the *graffitto* work that showed on the façades above rusticated basements, or the *frescoes* that found a place under the *loggie*, looking out on the *cortili*. From the simple tower of early ages, the Palazzo of Florence had been evolved without a break, and at last





Palagio di Parte Guelfa,
with Vasari's Loggetta

The struts are in stone imitating
wooden construction.

Torre di Parte Guelfa. Ponte Vecchio with Vasari's Gallery.

Note the stone struts imitating wooden construction. & how nearly their foothold corresponds with the Gallery-System of the ancient Tower.

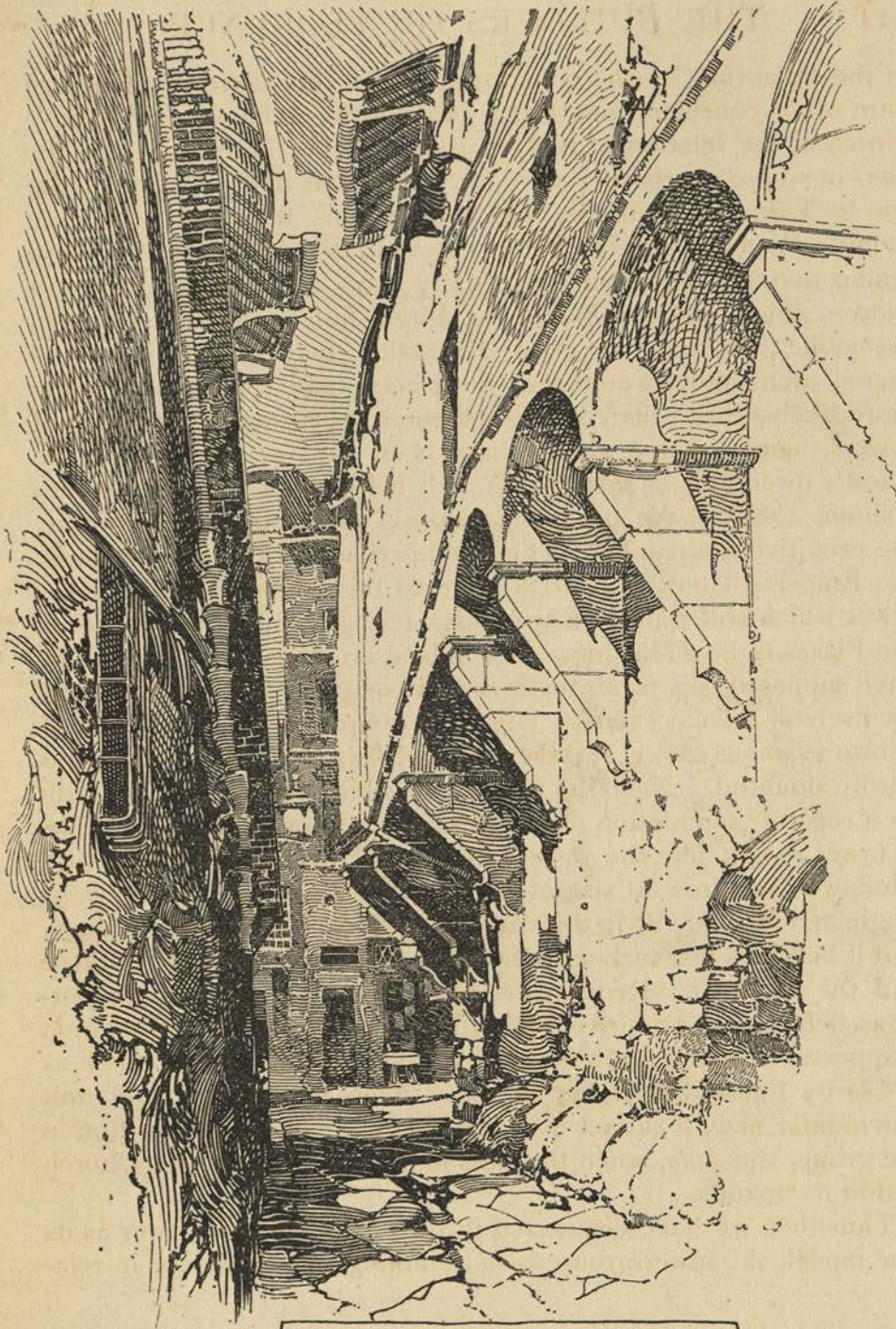
reached, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, its full and finished perfection.

Having thus treated in summary fashion, yet perhaps to some purpose, of the civil architecture of Florence, let us still more hastily and briefly deal with her church building. The order we thus hold is one eminently natural, for all must needs admit that the world, with its structure of civil society, existed before ever the Church was thought of by men. It is consonant too with much that has been already said, with higher authority than can be pretended here, of the material model of the Church as a building; which, it seems, is to be found in the Basilica, the Schola, or the dwelling-house of classic times: in short, the civil type preceded the ecclesiastical, and largely helped to form it. Further, it rests upon a historical fact to which we have already alluded, and promises to elicit from it important consequences. Civil, and especially military, architecture was the bridge by which the remains of classic building methods reached the Middle Ages, and by them the modern world. For the time of the Barbarian inroads brought a stay to all construction other than the needs of war required, and therefore especially to Church-building. What more natural then, and even inevitable, that when the pressure of these times relaxed, and men began again to gather substance and to build freely, the structures they raised should bear more than a reminiscence of the age just past? That this was so we have seen already in civil architecture: how military conditions and practice determined the form, and even the ornament and development, of the Florentine house. We are now to study, if more briefly, yet sufficiently, the operation of the same conditions on the practice of Church-building: a matter little known, and deserving much more attention than it has yet received.

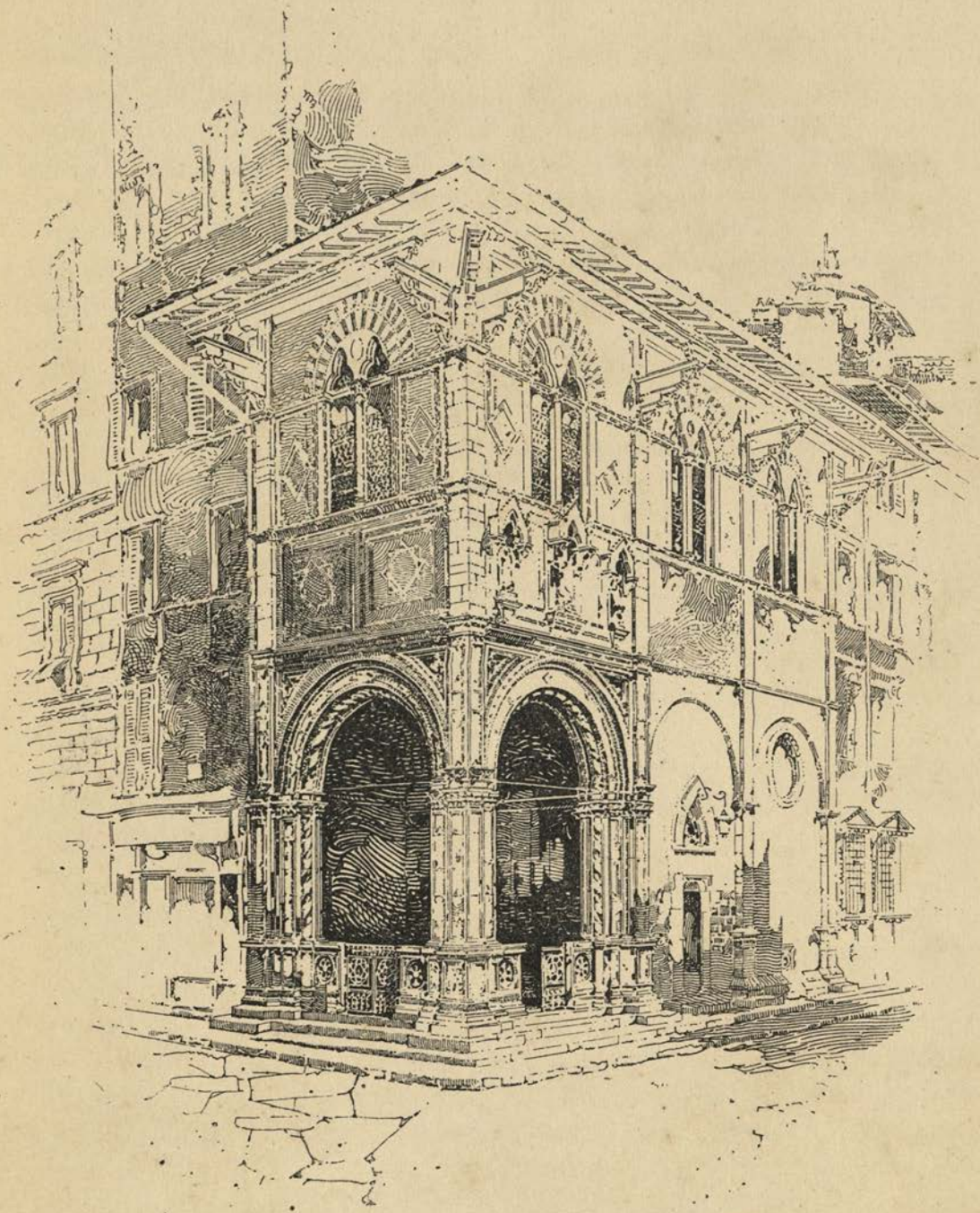
To begin with the original building unit, is it not plain, almost as soon as stated, that the Tuscan tower is the model from which the *Campanile* was derived? The earliest belfry of this kind for which we have documentary evidence was built at St. Peter's in Rome during the Pontificate of Stephen III (768–772), which makes it pretty certain that the Campanili began to rise in Italy almost

at the same time as the civil towers. To this correspondence of date other considerations bring contributive evidence. We have hinted at the relation of early parish churches in Florence to the *dadi* in whose courts they were often built—as that of San Miniato fra le Torri, for example, which bears this relation in its very name. We have also often noticed, and may here recall, the close connection obtaining in these early days between Church and State, which made Church buildings fully available for civil assemblies, so that any deep distinction between common and sacred architecture would then have been quite unnatural. What more likely, then, that, where a Church stood among a group of towers, one of these should have been built or assigned as the priest's dwelling; or that the Church bells, when these came into fashion, should have been hung aloft in the *solaio* or attic of this, the primitive campanile? Thus, and perhaps for this very purpose, the Emperor Conrad in 1038 gave to the Badia of Florence the tower which still stands on the monastery ground at the corner of the Piazza di San Martino. But indeed no other proof of what we have supposed can be stronger than a comparison of the buildings themselves. Take even so late an example of the campanile as Giotto's famous tower, and the origin of that type of construction is hardly doubtful. Near the Church to which it belongs, yet built on a separate foundation of its own; divided into a vertical series of tower rooms, like the ancient dwelling-houses of Florence, with windows that grow in size as they rise from the soil, it betrays its origin at a glance. Strip this campanile of its marbles and carvings, and it becomes just such a tower as Florence once built by the score and the hundred. Reduce the neighbouring Church to proportions befitting a primitive Florentine parish, and the old relation reappears, in which a tower near by was assigned to the Church as a Clergy house and Belfry in one. Thus the architectural unit enters on a new, a sacred use, and this in virtue of its position in the group, the *dado*, when that was hallowed by holding a Church within its bounds.

Thus then we have discovered in the campanile, the tower as its true model, the tower-group as determining its sacred use in rela-



Sporti in Via delle Brache



Loggia del Bigallo

Notice the double bracketing in wood under the eaves

tion to the Church, and, finally, the attic *terrazza* at its summit, specialised as the belfry proper. This last, however, is only one example of how even the details of civil architecture were adopted in Church building, and adapted to new uses. We pursue this line of study, and find that the tower basement, and even the battlements that formed its crown, were alike fruitful. They passed over, with the tower itself, to the service of the Church, where they became the germs of a new development in construction and decoration alike.

Let us begin with the basement. The essential point here lies in the vault separating this, the ground-floor of the tower, from the first and following storeys. We have seen its development in civil architecture, through the various forms of the Loggia, private, social and civic; is it possible, we ask, that any like fortune should await it in its new and sacred function? This might seem unlikely, and was in fact impossible as long as the campanile stood free on its own independent site. But presently it moves nearer, becomes part of the Church itself, and in situations almost infinitely varied; at the west end of one of the aisles (Santa Maria Maggiore) where it unites with the façade, and rises through the roof; as a porch and belfry in front of the principal door; on the site of the north or south transept in churches not otherwise cruciform (St. Antimo, Montalcino), or, where transepts have been developed, in the angle between one of these and the chancel: this last perhaps the commonest arrangement. Thus related to the Church, the vault of the campanile basement is at last in fruitful soil and begins to show signs of life.

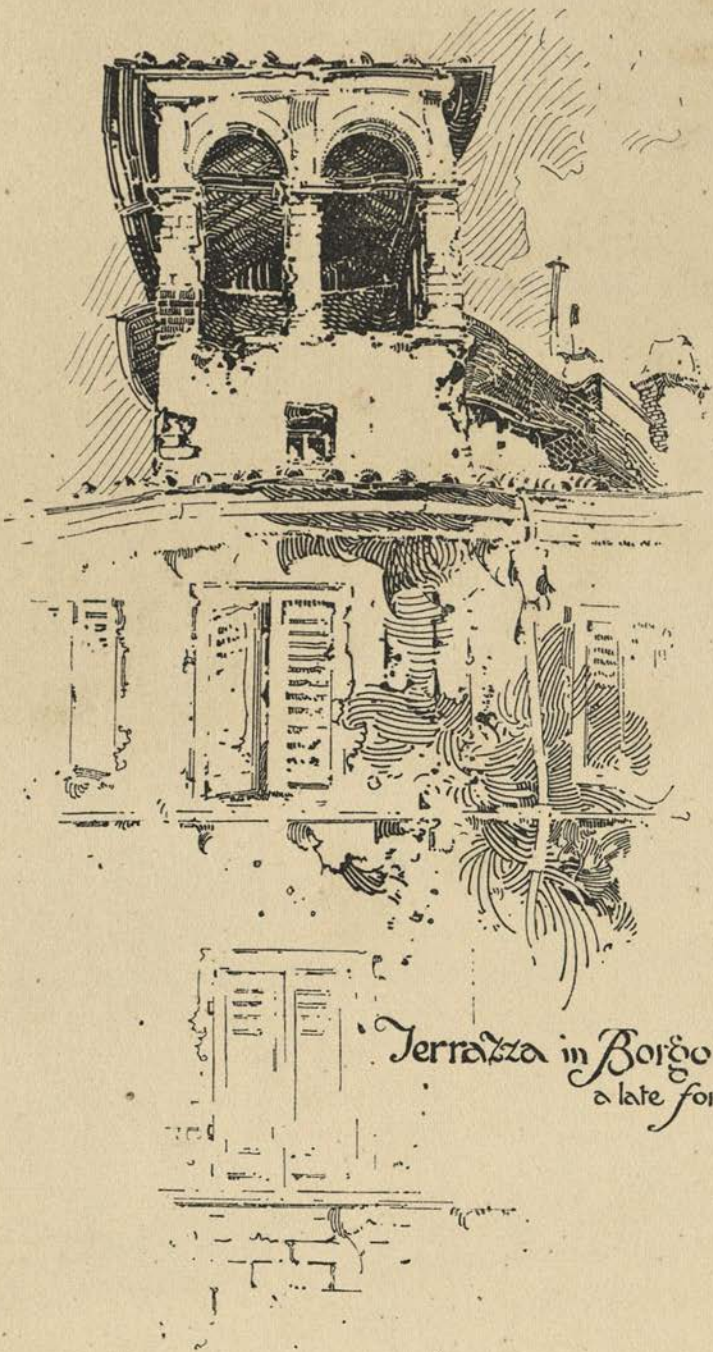
Romanesque Architecture drew its distinction from the use it made of the vault, which had slept for ages almost unnoticed in catacomb, *confessio* and crypt, till the new life of the eleventh century awoke it, and carried its forms over chancel, transepts, aisles and nave in a gradual progress that truly prepared for the later triumph of the Gothic style. Whence then came the impulse to this development? If we are not mistaken, it may well be traced to the practice that began to make the campanile part of the Church itself. In this new situation the vault of these towers

was suggestive. Its plan pointed to a series of surrounding bays in which it might repeat its characteristic feature till the vaulting was continuous, and the whole Church roofed in, not with wood but with stone. Hence an ecclesiastical development of the vault exactly answering to the civil. We cannot help noticing how closely the Loggia dei Lanzi, for example, corresponds with the aisle of a Church, and naturally, if, as we suppose, both rose from the same original. From its nook between transept and chancel the tower developed the vaulted chancel-aisle and *chevet;* from the west it threw bays along the aisles of the nave; from its place at the door it developed a porch across the front; the exact ecclesiastical equivalent of the secular *Loggia.* During the ages when the Church was roofed in wood, the tower basement formed the only school of vaulting practice. How natural, then, that we should find in the campanile the germ of the new style; especially when we notice that the beginnings of Church vaulting belong to the time when these towers entered into the substance of the buildings they served.

If the tower vault was thus vital in a constructive sense, its battlements had a like importance as regards the decoration of churches, both Romanesque and Gothic. Functional in civil architecture, and in the building of fortified churches and convents, such as that of the Badia a Settimo, the battlement had a long history in its secondary form as a *motif* for Church decoration, from its timid appearance as a mere eaves-row of pensile arches in the early Romanesque—see the façade of San Stefano—to a bold projection and close imitation of its original in the exterior cornice and internal nave gallery of Santa Maria del Fiore. There is some reason to think that the bracket in this shape profoundly influenced all kinds of mouldings, by lending its profile—as in the Belfry of Pisa—to lines perhaps originally derived from the classic *lacunar.* It is certain that animal and human forms in this situation—see the battlements of Palazzo Vecchio—falling as they did on natural drainage points, gave rise to the *gargoyle,* and that the inevitable reappearance of the column under these brackets gave them the peculiar decorative form which Lucca and Pisa preferred to excess;

Palazzo Canacci, Piazza S. Biagio

Here the Terrazza comes to its full development



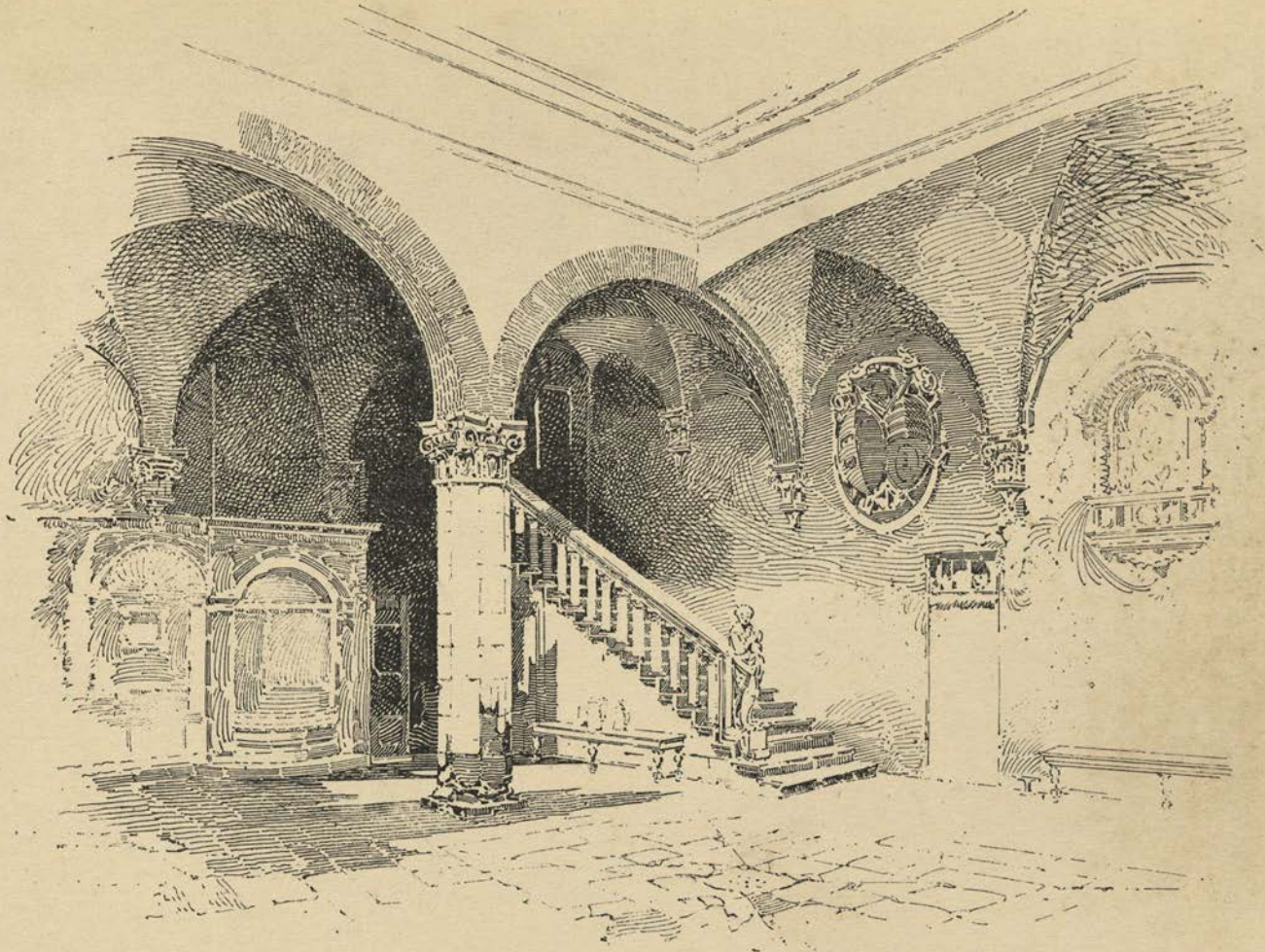
Terrazza in Borgo la Croce
a late form

Via. della Condotta, *looking EAST*.

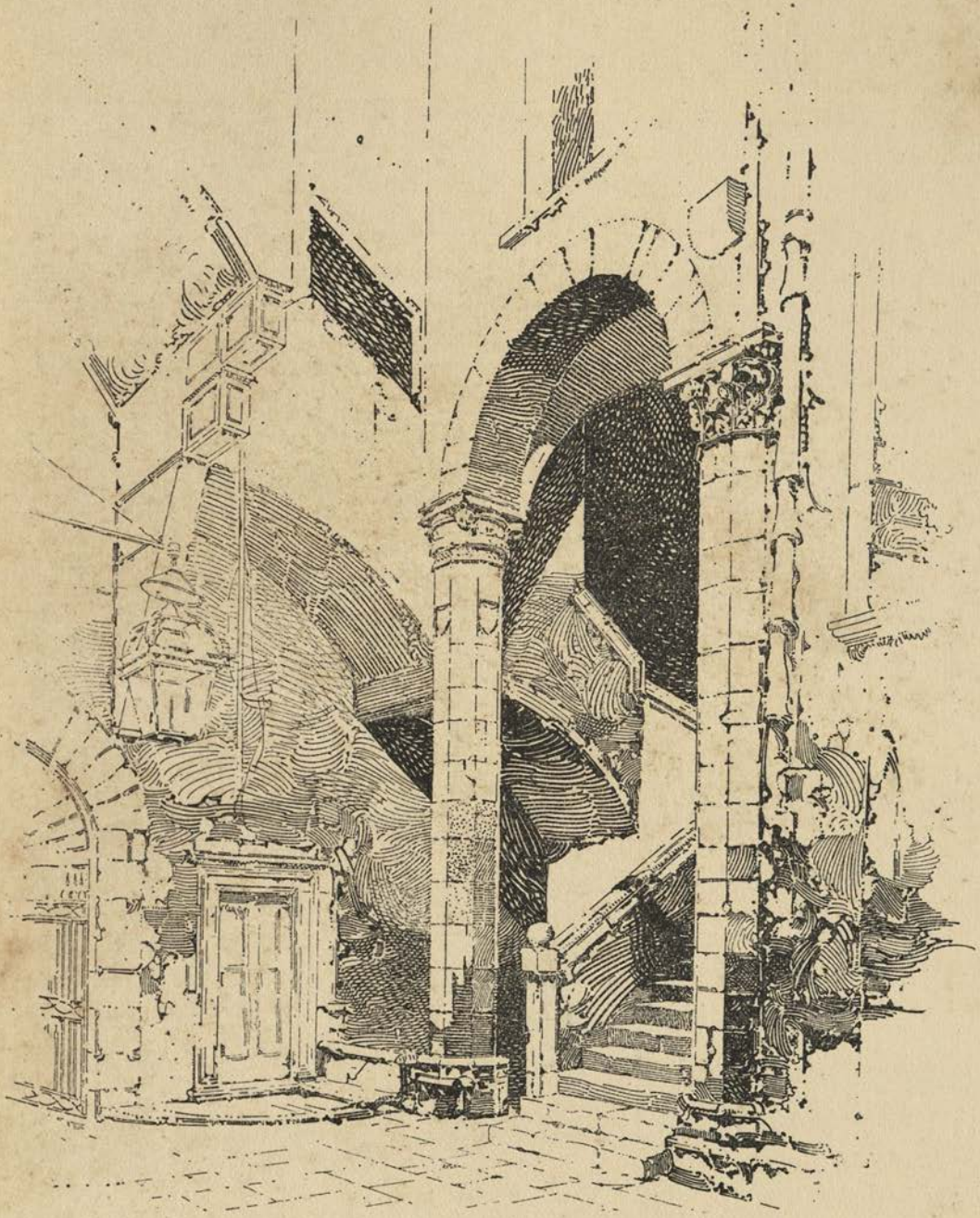
Notice the grouped towers on the left, one of which shews an early form of Terrazza

covering their façades with tiers of modified battlements. The Campanile of Pisa thus repeats, in a decorative sense and with the solidity of stone, that very framework which, in the form of wooden galleries, was once the external feature of every Florentine tower.

One final comprehensive analogy and we have done. The clergy took the characteristic vestments of their service by mere modification from the common costume of the later Empire, the Alb from the tunic, the Chasuble and Cope from the cloak, and the Stole from the handkerchief. Since this is now generally allowed, we may find in it a certain probability that the dress of the Church as a material building—its decorative architecture—would be correspondingly borrowed and modified from the forms and resources of civil construction. Now this is just what we have seemed to see at work in Tuscan, and especially in Florentine, Church building; a process by which the primitive secular tower was progressively consecrated; its body as the Clergy-house, its upper *solaio* the Belfry, its basement the graft carrying vaulting to the Church to form at length the Romanesque and Gothic roof; its gallery system the fertile source of multiplied decorative forms, within and without the sacred fabric. And indeed it is thus that all great Architecture lives and triumphs, by moving on easy natural lines, not straining after effect, accepting its conditions, building for convenience, adopting, in structure and decoration alike, the suggestions that naturally offer themselves in the course of ordinary practice. Such at least was the way of Florence and great was her reward.



Cortile of Palazzo Canigiani



Cortile of Palazzo Davanzati

East wall of S. Remigio with campanile, from Via dei Rustici.

PART II

MONUMENTS OF FLORENTINE COMMERCE

CHAPTER I

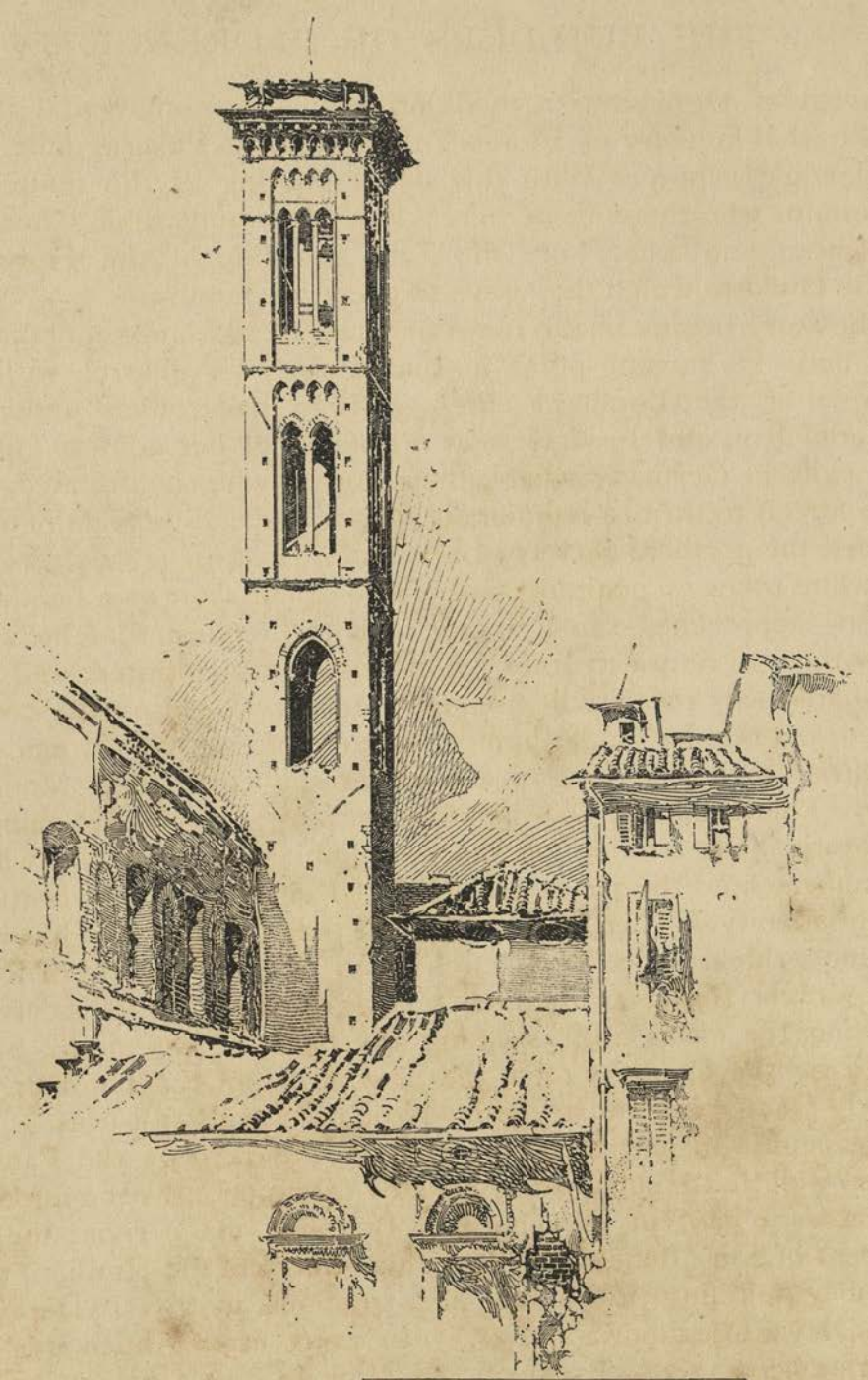
OGNISSANTI AND THE ARTE DELLA LANA

IT may be well to repeat here, in a word, what has already been said of the central importance of the Arte della Lana in Florentine commerce. The Calimala, first of Florentine Arts, had taught East and West to look to this city for supplies of finely dressed cloths. When the Arte della Lana rose in the early thirteenth century (1212), it strengthened the commercial position of Florence in this wise, that henceforth the world bought from her cloth which had not merely been dyed and dressed, but woven here as well. Florence might still be a debtor to Andalusia or Barbary for merino, or to England for fine wool,—the raw materials of her principal industry,—but, with the coming of this new Art, she learned to card and spin and weave imported wool to a high standard, so that the cloth which Calimala sent abroad was now of home manufacture. It is easy to see how this change helped the city; not only giving new employment to her people, but bringing larger profits in from abroad. Now this fresh departure was due in no small degree to the instructions and example of a religious Order—that of the Frati Umiliati—and we may therefore find in their Church and

Convent of Ognissanti a more original and monumental record of the wool industry of Florence than even the Palagio della Lana itself could supply. With this understanding of the matter, let us inquire who these Frati were; how they built their Church at Florence; and what were the form and fate of the Florentine Trade Guild to which they gave so great an impulse.

The story begins in the times of Frederic Barbarossa (1152-90), and finds its starting-point in that Emperor's quarrel with the League of the Lombard cities. Milan had fallen under the Imperial ban, and Frederic sent a number of her noblest families into exile in Germany where, their goods being confiscated, they were forced to turn to handicraft. They became weavers of wool, learned the northern secrets of art, and at last, in 1180, dressed in the white robes of penitents—which no doubt their own hands had woven—approached the Emperor with the request that he would allow them to return to Italy. This favour was granted, and soon Lombardy saw these exiles reappear in a new guise; their white robe now a regular habit; humility their professed virtue, and their industrial society seeking peace under the cover of a Monastic Rule. One thinks of the manifold devices of protective mimicry in nature, and, looking on the new habit and what it covered, remembers how the times had changed since the early centuries of Christianity. Then, religion sought protection, now it has itself become a shield; once the Church stood before the world of Rome as a simple Burial Club, now secular industry seeks safety by adopting the forms and assuming the habit of Religion. Sanctioned by the Pope in 1200, the new Order of the Umiliati had already planted its industry in many of the Lombard towns.

Alessandria in particular, the city built in 1179 on the Panaro, and so well that it successfully resisted for six months the forces of Barbarossa; had, in its suburb of Bugnola, made room for the Convent of San Michele as a flourishing house of the Umiliati, thus curiously fulfilling its proud and gracious motto: "Deprimit elatos, levat Alexandria *stratos*." In 1239, when Amico was the Superior here, this Convent of San Michele sent a colony southward across the Apennines to Florence, where the Bishop Ardingo



Church of Ognissanti

Note the ancient window heads in nave wall..

settled them in San Donato de Turri, a deserted Priory of Augustinian Canons. Here they worked for twelve years under difficulties because of distance from the Florentine market, till, in 1251, the then Bishop, Giovanni Mangiadori, transferred them to the Chapel of Santa Lucia, *ad Sanctum Eusebium*, sul Prato. The Episcopal Charter, dated September 11th, has the following notable passage in its preamble :—

"Since the approved and praiseworthy Order of the Frati Umiliati of St. Michael of Alessandria, lately planted in the Florentine diocese, has been both well-pleasing to God, and has brought gain, both spiritual and temporal, to the citizens of Florence ; so that, not only does the city itself flourish, but both monks, and others of the faithful, do more fruitfully and forcefully stir up one another to the imitation and service of Jesus Christ ; so then it is fitting that we . . . lend a willing ear to the appeal of their necessity. . . . Wherefore considering that the said Frati cannot conveniently carry on at S. Donato a Torre . . . their art, to wit that of wool, in weaving and selling cloth, and other works whereby they may live ; since they do so by the labour of their hands, not asking alms but giving largely to the needy ; for that the said place is no little way off from the City, so that fewer dealers visit them there : we have determined . . . to bring them near the City, where they may better serve God . . . and carry on a wider trade. Wherefore we . . . give and grant in exchange therefor, to thee the venerable Don Amico, by grace of God Provost of the Church of St. Michael at Alessandria . . . the Chapel of Sta. Lucia hard by St. Eusebio . . . which chapel is adjoining to your oratory, and to the Church which ye mean to build in honour of All Saints as ye say."

This document throws considerable light on the position and prospects of the Umiliati in 1251. The Bishop tells us that ere he gave them Santa Lucia they had a chapel near by, and meant to build a Church. This implies that they had already acquired ground in the neighbourhood, and there are, fortunately, contemporary deeds which make the matter still more precise. Rather more than a year before the Bishop's donation, and precisely on the

31st of April, 1250, the Commune of Florence, "considering how they profit the city by their Arte della Lana," handed over to the Frati of San Donato a Torre "land and houses in the parish of San Paolo and Santa Lucia," and in the same year they had themselves acquired from the Tornaquinci at the price of 497 florins a piece of ground, measuring more than thirty-four *staiora*, lying between San Paolo and Santa Lucia, on which there were two houses. It is highly probable that we have to do here not with two acquisitions but with one only. The Tornaquinci had fallen, as Ghibellines, under the ban of the *Primo Popolo*, the Government of the day; they were *sbanditi*, and it is probable that the Commune interfered with their property so far at least as to forbid any sale save to approved persons. Hence the deed of permission, and the opportunity of which Fra Ruffino, Prior of San Donato, availed himself. It was an important moment for the Umiliati, who by this purchase gained the site on which they built their Church and Convent of Ognissanti; and hardly less important for the city, which, by this permission, drew nearer to herself those who were to put the Arte della Lana in the way of all its future success.

From 1250 onwards, then, we are to think of the Frati as busy in building on the ground they had acquired. The Bishop's act of 1251, transferring them from San Donato to Santa Lucia, brought them close to the scene of operations, and gave them a church which they could occupy indefinitely till their own was built. Their first concern was therefore the convent, which they laid out grandly in its various cloisters from the line of the Via Palazzuolo, or Borgo San Paolo as it was then called; while their frontage on the Borgognissanti began to be occupied by houses built for the lay-workmen who plied the loom under their skilled direction. In 1256 the convent was already at such a point of progress that the Umiliati made it their new residence. They were now ready to devote all their time and means as builders to the fabric of the new church, which, in fact, was completed in 1270. Before we consider particularly this structure itself, we may just refer in passing to a deed of the 29th October, 1279, in which the City of Florence, desiring to lay out "an *insula*, suburb, piazza, gate, and weir in

front of the Friars' Church of Ognissanti," and at the same time willing "to content the said Frati" with whose ground they proposed to interfere, determined that "in front of the Church of Ognissanti should be left a Piazza of an hundred *braccia* square; on which there should never be any building; and that the City gate should be made to correspond with the Borgo." This Piazza—still free as the Piazza Manin—then sloped to the Arno; it was the place where the Frati had their *tiratoi* and fulling mills. This weir saved them water for washing and dressing their wool and cloth; the Borgo was their own creation and filled with their workmen. It was here, in the "Tinta di Borgognissanti," that Sacchetti's Agnolo di Ser Gherardo found the sorry jade on which he rode his famous Gilpin-race from Peretola, to the wonder of all beholders. A populous and busy world indeed was that which the Frati had gathered about their doors.

The site of the new Church of Ognissanti was somewhat definitely limited. On the west, the buildings of the convent were already in being, and drew their lines from that of the Borgo to the north. On the east, it seems pretty certain that their free ground found its boundary in the wall of a little chapel; which may, possibly, have been the "Oratory" of the Frati, mentioned by Bishop Mangiadori in 1251. So at least Padre Tognocchi says in his description of the church; and only the distance separating this building from the Church of Santa Lucia would seem to throw a certain doubt on the identification. A chapel there was at any rate, in the shape of an oblong some sixty feet by twenty, set north and south, with its altar to the north, and its door towards the Borgo on the south; from which it was separated by an open piazzetta, probably an ancient cemetery. A concrete column, with a thirteenth-century capital surmounted by a cross, stood free in front of the chapel door. This is still visible, and reminds us of those at the baptistery and Santa Felicità; marking, no doubt, the western suburban cemetery of Florence as the others did those to the north and south of the city.

It is not known what architect was employed by the Frati to build their church, but the way in which he dealt with the

difficulties of a somewhat limited site is sufficient testimony to his skill. The long axis of the building was laid at right angles to the line of the Borgognissanti on which the principal façade stood. Thus the road, which the new industry of the Umiliati had made a populous street, was to have its own parish church at last; just as the Borgo San Paolo had to the north. The plan of Ognissanti was cruciform. The nave, which stretched north from the Borgo, had, perforce, to stand so far to the west as might leave free the cemetery on which the ancient chapel looked out. This distance was so nicely calculated that the east transept, which bounded this space on the north, abutted exactly on the west wall of the chapel, making it part of the new building. On the west, a transept of similar length just fell free of the convent buildings; a necessary condition of the problem, as the lines here, unlike those of the church, had been drawn from that of the Borgo San Paolo, and therefore could not combine well with those of the new church, taken from Borgognissanti. A slight projection of the principal axis to the north completed the cruciform plan, which, speaking roughly, measured about a hundred and sixty feet from north to south, by a hundred from east to west. The campanile, on a base some twelve feet square, stood in the angle between the nave and the east transept, and on these lines, simple but far from unstudied, the ground plan of the church was complete.

The elevation of this building offers some points which are worth attention. The façade on the Borgo was a square of some fifty feet surmounted by a low gable. The nave was bounded to east and west by walls fifty feet high by one hundred and thirty-three in length, and on the north by a gable wall corresponding to that of the façade, but pierced by three arches, of which that in the centre gave access to the chancel, and those on each side to its adjoining chapels. Next these chapel-arches, but at right angles to them, two others opened to east and west over a space of twenty-six feet, thus connecting the transepts with the body of the church. The ridge of the transept roofs reached a height of some fifty feet, thus falling in to the principal building at its eaves-level. To the south of their ridge these roofs only covered

a space of thirteen feet; to the north, if there has been no alteration here, they dropped at the same angle over a like distance, plus fifteen feet more—the depth of the northern chapels adjoining the chancel. Subsequent additions to the church have made it difficult to say how this arrangement appeared on the east and west at the transept façades; it will be remembered, however, that on the east the transept abutted on the adjoining ancient chapel, which must thus have covered the greater part of its elevation. Over the longer slope of the transept roofs was visible the upper part of the chancel, which projected some ten feet to the north of the adjoining chapels; probably in the form of a polygonal apse. In contrast to the transepts, which have been greatly changed in the course of ages, the campanile presents us with the pleasing certainty of its original form. From its narrow base of twelve feet square, it rises to a height of some ten breadths in a delicious rhythm of varied storeys and apertures; finding its close above in a cornice of exquisite proportion and projection; perhaps the most beautiful of its kind in Florence. This part of his work is enough of itself to let us taste the quality of the unknown architect. It leaves us wishing that, not the campanile alone, but the whole of this group of buildings had been suffered to remain as it left the hands of its designer.

Coming now to the details which gave character to the architecture of Ognissanti, we may note that the church was built throughout of the brown *pietra forte*, roughly dressed in small pieces. Simplicity, indeed, if not parsimony, was a chief note of the construction. The nave was single, without aisles or arches of any sort; and was covered by a plain wooden roof, remarkable, if not unique, in this particular, that its trusses and tie-beams are not connected above by any longitudinal ridge-piece. This unusual form may have been adopted to save weight, and so allow the walls to be built with greater economy of material. In the same spirit the campanile was carried up on two sides over the walls of the nave and transept, not without the help of internal relieving arches to support its mass. Yet this cheap and clever architecture did not lack a charm of its own. The proportions—a first element in such

beauty—were carefully studied. The masses of the chancel and transepts, with their northern chapels, seem, so far as we can reconstruct what has perished, to have composed what must have been a whole both graceful and pleasing. The windows, set high in the nave, lower in the cross and chancel, were narrow lancets of finely-dressed stone with a deep external splay—the *extrados* of their pointed arches rising high above the *intrados* in a style well known to the masters of the time in Tuscan architecture—and were marked at the springing by a delicate double moulding carried along face and splay. Above these the walls were crowned by a flat constructive cornice in six rows of red bricks; the first and fourth plain, the second, third, and fifth set *a sega*, with their corners coming to the front; the sixth a course of moulded brick in tiny brackets, on which the eaves of the roof come to rest. This simple and effective decoration is carried throughout the whole exterior, and, at the north end of the church, must once have been a valuable ornament; distinguishing the various masses of nave, transepts and chancel, where these rose one above another, while helping to combine them in an evident and pleasing unity. Pity that a decorative device so simple, and yet so effective, seems quite forgotten and despised in the Tuscany of to-day.

Internally, the Church of Ognissanti showed the same style in somewhat new effects. The hint of graceful Gothic, supplied by its long lancet windows, was reinforced in the fine harmonic chord of the five pointed arches at the crossing; three greater opening on chancel and transepts, two less belonging to the chapels that flanked the high altar. All these were visible in full face or retreating perspective as soon as one entered the church from the Borgo. Above, the trusses, tie-beams, and even the wall-plates were decorated in a simple but effective scheme of colour, large traces of which still remain. Below, the floor was laid down in cement, and showed here and there, as time went on, not a few carved and inlaid marble tombstones; the church thus coming to serve as an annex to the more ancient cemetery on the east.

Growth and change were indeed constant factors here, modifying Ognissanti as they did every other building of its kind and time.

From the first (1270) the floor space here had been largely occupied by the choir, set in an oblong of containing walls which projected those of the chancel southward across the line of the transepts, and thus gave its *Tramezzo* to the nave. In the fourteenth century the additions and alterations were many and important. Two chapels were easily contrived to adjoin, in the east and west transept respectively, the original pair that flanked the chancel. The new chapels nearly, but not quite, occupied all the space remaining on the north side of the transepts, leaving a narrow passage only between their outer walls and those of the transept gables. On the east this interval is marked by a door leading to a closet used for church furniture; on the west it served as an access to the new sacristy soon built here. The adjoining gable-wall of the west transept was the first to admit a thoroughly constructive change. Pierced by a lofty pointed arch, it gave access to the new chapel of the Gucci Dini, built, before 1375, on strong vaults over the cloister-aisle, and reached by a stair enclosing the family tomb on the level of the transept. In all these additions—the chapel of the Presepio, the passage and sacristy, and especially the Gucci Dini chapel—one can feel, as it were, the intrusion of the Convent on the Church in the alien lines of the Cloister, which now begin to reproduce themselves in these annexes to the transept.

Almost simultaneously something of the same kind, but on a greater scale, was happening on the east. Here, it will be remembered, the transept abutted on the ancient chapel that lay without. The east transept gable was pierced and arched as the west had been; the building beyond unroofed, and raised to match the height of the transept, which projected its axis eastward still, beyond the older building, in the terminal chapel of the Nome di Gesù—finished in 1376—corresponding to that of the Gucci Dini on the west. Both ends of the ancient chapel, lying still beyond the line of the transept to the north and south, were thus definitely thrown into the church, of which in time they became chapels; that on the north appropriated to the Lenzi in 1451, and the other on the south dedicated to San Pietro di Alcantara in the eighteenth century.

Though the last quarter of the fourteenth century thus saw the lines of this church so considerably altered, it is not to be supposed that this age, or that which followed, had nothing to their credit at Ognissanti. If the purity of the primitive architectural plan was seriously interfered with, we must also remember that the church gained during these years not a little precious decoration in the way of frescoes and painted altar panels. Few indeed are the fragments of these that time has spared to us. One of the most important is the great Crucifix, now in the sacristy, but which, when Giotto had painted it, hung no doubt from the nave roof over the entrance to the ancient choir. The same master decorated one of the chapels in fresco, and, though his work there has perished, the chronicle of the church assures us it must have been one or other of the two that adjoin the chancel. Giotto also painted four panels for Ognissanti, one of which Vasari tells us was a picture of the Virgin and Child with attendant angels. The other, which represented the death of the Virgin, was so beautiful in its simple truth, that Michelangelo never wearied in praising its merits. This was painted for an altar on the Tramezzo of the choir. Buffalmacco also worked here on a wall overlooking the cemetery, where he set in enduring fresco the Nativity, and the Visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. In 1328 Bernardo Daddi painted an altar-piece for the Mazzinghi; and soon the best hands of the time were busy here indeed, till the whole walls of the church were bright with frescoed colours. The Crucifixion on the north wall of the sacristy, the Annunciation beside the great door, are remaining samples of what must have been a long series that stretched up the nave, reached the sacristy by the west transept, and fairly figured the New Testament story. On the east the same story recommenced in the chapel next the choir, where the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch might be seen in fresco as late as 1691. An inscription in the floor at the altar of the Nome di Gesù tells that this chapel also was painted before 1376 by an unknown hand, as those are also unknown which surely carried a like decoration down the east nave till the lunette over the great door, with its fresco of the Virgin and saints, joined, like a binding ring,

the commencement to the close in the grandly completed series. Above it on every side the windows showed painted glass in their lancets; in the midst stood the enclosed choir, where, as the fifteenth century drew to its close, Botticelli and Ghirlandaio set their rival saints—Augustine and Jerome—one on each side of the gates; the high altar already shone in all the splendid art of a polyptych by Taddeo Gaddi, and so this Church of Ognissanti was rightly esteemed as among the finest in Florence.

We have neither time nor inclination to trace the changes which brought this place to the taste of the seventeenth century, and left it as we see to-day. Let us remember rather its finer state, and think of the flourishing industry of the Umiliati which provided so amply for its building and enrichment. That industry did more, for it not only gave Florence a great church, but proved the beginning of its principal Art. We return, then, to the Guild of Wool—thus closely associated with Ognissanti—that we may try to understand something of the order and power of these Trades Unions which formed the Substance of the Florentine State.

The Arte della Lana was essentially a flourishing branch on the more ancient stem of the Calimala. This, the premier Art of Florence, had, in its import and export of foreign cloth, opened and used the great trade routes to the north, by the Arno and the seas; overland to the French ports and thence by sea, or by land entirely, *via* the Alps of the St. Gothard or the Brenner. Thus, when the city began to see how much advantage might come of weaving cloth at home instead of importing it, the difficulties of distance and transport were already overcome, and the way open for the arrival of that finer foreign wool with which the produce of the Tuscan flocks could never hope to compete. The French fairs, where so much cloth buying had been done, were closed, but the machinery of Calimala was still available, and simply served now to bring wool where it had brought cloth before. The looms of the Umiliati had taught the Florentines how to weave that wool in the close and rough style of the north; and behold, then, in mid-thirteenth century—for it is of

this time we are speaking—an Art new born which began by supplying Calimala, and ended by superseding it, the famous Art of Wool.

All through Lombard times there had been weaving in Tuscany to supply local needs; the work went on in labourers' dwellings, was encouraged in certain religious houses, and even attained a rude organisation of its own. What the Umiliati brought southward, then, was not a new industry, but a better style of weaving. The enterprise under which they came to Florence found further occupation in perfecting, and above all in organising, this manufacture on a great and ever-growing scale; in the knowledge that only thus could it meet the needs of Calimala and become a real source of civic wealth. The keen commercial sense of the Florentines was seen here, first, in the care they took to classify the raw material, for such classification then became the basis of a careful and profitable division of labour in the trade. At the bottom of the scale stood the local product: the coarse wool of the Tuscan flocks. Next came that called *di garbo*, from oversea, the merino of Morocco (Maghreb), or Spain (Algarve); while the highest grade of all was held by the *Inghilese*, the staple of Britain and the isles. Such distinctions were carefully carried through the whole process of manufacture; they determined both the quality and destination of the finished product of the looms, which was either rough homespun of Tuscan wool made in small quantity for the local market, or the finer merinos called *panni di garbo*, or, finally, the finest cloth of all, made of English wool and known as the *panni di San Martino* for a reason which shall presently be explained. The *panni di garbo* or *di San Martino* were the wear of the wealthier Florentines, and, exported in large quantity, were the chief source of the city's prosperity. Well might the grandee on festal days walk forth in his scarlet *lucco* and feel fitly dressed, for this use was no mere patriotic patronage given to local industries, it was rather, like our own *wool-sack*, the solemn, almost hieratic symbol of that commerce which was the very substance of Florence, the source of her life and condition of her fortune. To jest at such a *garb* were no light matter, and when Cosimo il

Vecchio allowed himself to say that with an ell or two of fine scarlet one might make a good-man of Florence,[1] the sneer was formed on a use that the prosperity of a great past had dignified, and was pointed, alas, by the falling fortunes of a great commercial estate. These fortunes were built up to prosperity by a careful, almost pedantic, attention to details, of which we have a fine example in the significant fact that, abroad, the webs of Florence came to be used as a standard of length as well as of quality, so exactly had the measure of each been taken and recorded before it left the warehouse. Such care speaks of success and of the honest pride in handicraft that success quickens, making a man glad to do more always than the bare needs of trade and business require. These, then, were the men who made Florence glad and great in the grand days of her prosperity.

So then we reach the human factor in the wool-trade; the workmen who built it up, and who in so doing, made their city what she came to be. In these early days at least the bitter jest of Cosimo finds no application; for then it was not the cloth that made the man, but the man that made the cloth, and far more; laying a longer warp than he himself knew, and shooting a wider weft; for no less a fabric than that of the State itself was forming on these busy looms.

In so complex a world of labour we had better begin, as the trade did with its wool, by distinguishing clearly the different classes at work. The division of labour in the Florentine wool-trade was as deeply characteristic of its methods as the grading of the prime material, and contributed no less to its commercial success. At the foot of the industrial scale we find the washers and combers of wool, who first handled the fleeces on their arrival in Florence. These were the very proletariat of the trade, working for small wages, liable to instant dismissal, yet unable to give their master warning because always in his debt. The wooden clogs they wore in the wet of the washing and carding houses gained them the nickname of *Ciompi*, and it was their

[1] "Che due canne di panno rosato fanno un uomo dabbene"

hard case which chiefly led to the famous revolt of 1378 under Michele di Lando.

The second class consisted of the spinners of thread or yarn. A good deal of this work was done under primitive conditions, in private houses, and even in the country, where the parish priests often made themselves agents for the transport of the finished article to Florence. These workers, men or women, had a more independent position than that of the wool-combers, and were paid not in wages, but by the price they received for their thread or yarn. A certain number, however, fell under the direct power of the Arte, became wage-earning hands, and even acted as brokers in buying up for the Arte the work of their fellow-spinners who remained free.

And so we come to the substance of this industry in the class of the weavers of cloth. Here the loom and other necessary tools implied a capital relatively important; which prevented these weavers from enjoying the modified liberty which belonged to the spinners. For either the looms they plied were the master's property from the first, or at least they soon became so, as pledged to him by the workmen for their debts. In either case the weaver lost his freedom, and was obliged to work for the master; never on his own account.

When the cloth left the loom, the new and peculiar industry which the Arte had set up in Florence was done, and its products, though far from finished, passed into hands that long experience had trained in dressing foreign cloth for the Calimala. As between these two major Arts one begins to see the position pretty clearly. The Calimala had imported cloth as long as it could profitably do so; had given the webs out to be finished in the fine Florentine fashion, and had then exported them. Now steps in the Arte della Lana with its home manufacture, to meet the failure in the foreign supply of cloth. More and more it fills the place of Calimala in giving employment to the cloth dressers; more and more, therefore, the premier Art of Florence becomes, as indeed Calimala came to be called, the *Mercanzia,* as concerned, not with the details of manufacture, which now belonged to the Lana, but with

import and export; with markets, routes and prices, in which its ancient experience was now of new and growing service. Thus what might have been a serious commercial crisis, leading to the ruin of many industries, and perhaps even to that of Florence herself, was safely avoided by the rise of the Art of Wool, which fairly earned its place as the centre and substance of Florentine commerce.

The workmen who brought the cloth to its perfection as a finished article ready for the market, were such as the walkers, or fullers (*gualchieri*), the washers (*lavatori*), stretchers (*tiratori*); the *rimendatori*, who darned faults in the web—an art still practised in Florence with great skill—the *cardatori* who raised the pile high, the *affettatori* who clipped it even, and, finally, the dyers (*tintori*) who gave it colour and lustre. Here, more than anywhere else, may be studied that precise division of labour which brought success in the market. As for the position of such subordinate trades with regard to the Arte della Lana, it was very much what their previous existence and employment by Calimala would lead one to expect. They were tolerably independent, at least at first, and so able to treat freely with the Arte on something like terms of equality. But, as time went on, the very movement of the great industrial machine of which they formed part reduced them to their place, and made them more and more the mere servants of the capital they helped to create. For the cloth as it left their hands passed into those of the Lanifex, the master of the trade, whose men sold it from some basement shop to Florentine customers; or, rather, who kept the bulk in store till the merchants of Calimala had cleared the way for its transport at profitable rates to the foreign market. In these *lanifices*, or wool-masters, we meet at last the men who formed the councils, made the laws and directed the operations of the Arte della Lana. They were the capitalists of this time and trade, and how much more and other than their modern representatives we must now try to see.

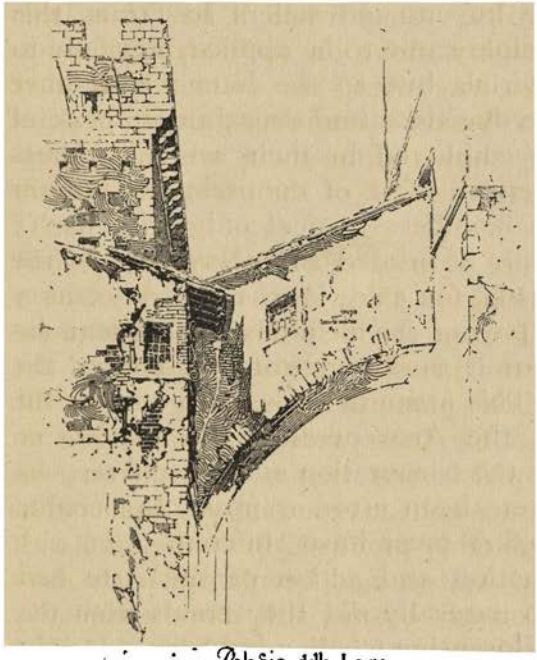
To the division of material and of labour already noted succeeded yet another application of the same principle. For the

purpose of this industry the city was itself divided, the workers in the finest kinds of cloth being gathered in one quarter of Florence, and the rest left to dwell where they pleased. The place of privilege was the quarter of San Martino, and here we have the reason why the best cloth bore the name of that saint. Now such division, applied alike to material, labour and even locality, speaks loudly of long association. Only when it has thus been organised for ages can an industry move on such artificial lines. Looking at the matter in this way then, the facts which have already come under our notice become luminous; they speak of a remote and simple past; they show the means by which progress was made, and at last the quality and fate of the undoubted power to which that progress led.

The remote industrial past of Lombard times survived in the few free *stamaiuoli,* who, working in their own town or country homes, were a direct survival from the first days of Tuscan industry. On the other hand, the priests who often collected the yarn for transport to town, and the name of *Convents* given to the quarters of the city as divided for these industrial ends, are no uncertain sign of the means which first began to transform individual labour and organise it as a collective industry. Association of this kind was indeed first profitably practised in connection with religious houses—such as Sant' Andrea had been from early days in Florence, and such as Ognissanti became, still more eminently, in the thirteenth century: true homes of industry where the *orare* and the *laborare* went hand in hand. We know then the real meaning of the transaction by which the great *tiratoi*—the cloth houses of the Umiliati in their Borgo—became the property of the Arte della Lana. The Arte was that corporation which organised industry from the point where the religious houses had left it, carrying such intensive action to the highest point of which the age, the state, and the circumstances of Florence were capable.

Thus seen, the real nature and function of the Arte appear not only plain, but, as it were, inevitable. For if, as we have said, division of labour implies organisation, this, in its turn, involves

its members in a sacrifice and self-restraint which no considerable body of men has ever practised save under stern control. Now such control was just what the Arte, as a Trade Council, existed to apply; and where it did so wisely, why, there its sternness might well be reckoned to it for virtue. A strong central pillar of the State, the Arte della Lana gained political power without consciously seeking it, and deserved all it gained because intent, first, on doing its own business well.



Palagio della Lana

The wisdom of the Arte was practical rather than theoretical; its one purpose to maintain in growing prosperity the industry it represented and ruled; its one principle, therefore, to buy in the cheapest market while ever selling in the dearest; its one preoccupation to cheapen what it must buy and raise the price where it must sell, if management could bring about such a result.

Keeping this general principle in mind, we have a key to many of the strange and, at first sight, arbitrary actings of the Guild. As the successor of the Umiliati, it continued their policy of concentration, by fighting against the independent workmen, and reducing them, as far as it could, to the position of wage-earning servants of its own. Now what was this but to make a cheap market in labour? Here, if anywhere, cheapness was vital, for the world had not yet learned how, by machinery, one man can do the work of twenty; many workers must be paid, and unless wages could be kept low the whole fabric of industry must go down. Where it could be done

then—as in the case of the weavers—the Arte fixed a maximum wage; and made it difficult for these men to pay off their debts to their masters that they might perforce remain under effective control.

For the same reason the Arte set itself against all kinds of middlemen, as representing waste of capital: they themselves, as a corporation, must be the sole buyers and sellers so far as this could be managed. This principle came to be applied, not only to the wool itself as prime material, but to the looms and other industrial tools, and even to the dye-stuffs and drysaltery in general which the subordinate trades employed in their several departments. The Arte, in fact, kept a kind of coöperative store in these articles, and obliged its members to deal only with itself; thus securing an abundant supply at prime cost. Nay more, when the cloth was finished and ready for sale, it was the Arte, as a corporation, that dealt in it; paying its members on account for the foreign buyers, from whom it thus undertook to collect the money due from these sales. This attitude helps us to understand the extreme care with which the Arte oversaw the matters of quality and measure; for these the corporation made itself responsible to the buyer, and had there been error or fraud, the credit, not of one but of all the *lanifices* must have suffered.

We have seen that the function and action of the Arte had something of the inevitable, so naturally did they result from the history and conditions of the Florentine woollen industry. It only remains to be said that they were fatal as well, marking that industry for decline and decay under changed conditions as themselves incapable of leading directly to the free trade of modern times. In this the Art of Wool but resembled the State of which it was the chief support. Neither had a true future in its native soil. Both must fall ere the liberty of later times could reorganise labour in its present industrial form.

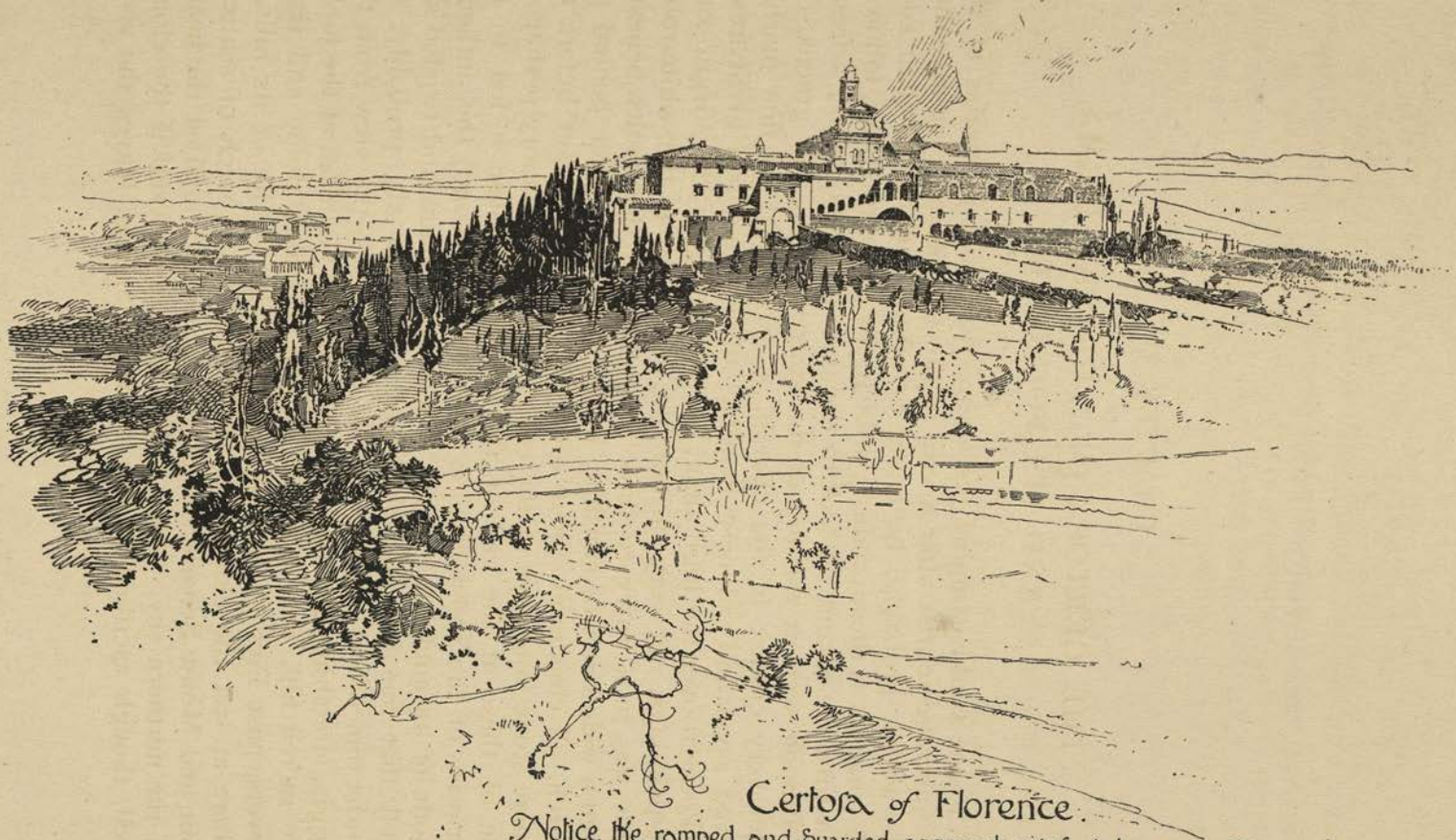
As regards the Arte della Lana, the causes of decline were specifically two; the failure in the supplies of English wool during the fifteenth century, and the discovery of America, which changed the trade routes of the world and upset all previous commercial

conditions. Yet Amerigo Vespucci, a parishioner here, sleeps with his fathers by that Chapel of St. Elisabeth where, they say, Ghirlandaio has left us in the lunette his authentic portrait. Thus, by a singular coincidence, Ognissanti is connected alike with the early rise and final fate of the Florentine Guild of Wool.

CHAPTER II

THE CERTOSA OF THE VAL D'EMA AND ITS FOUNDER

IF one could examine the impressions and memories of the average tourist after a visit to the Certosa of Florence, they would, probably, be found to afford little more than such matters as these: a dusty drive in the steam tramway, followed by a tiresome ascent on foot to the gate of the convent; a fresco by Empoli seen at the top of the stair, all reds and greens, the latter very crude; in the church, a great deal of fine marble, carved wood and colour generally, culminating in a great fresco by Poccetti over the high altar; in the Chapel of the Virgin some old paintings, not very memorable, especially as the white-robed guide was in a hurry to show the tombs in the vaults beneath. Then a wide burst of sunshine in the stretching space behind the church, all cloistered about with pillared arcades set before the square stone doorways of the cells; a sharper memory perhaps of one of these at the end of the cloister, because it led to the curiosity of the rooms, loggia and garden beyond, the authentic abode of an anchorite, empty now as any quaint and twisted sea-shell that has lost its inhabitant. Beyond all, probably, our tourist remembers—as how should he forget?—the view from that loggia, stretching gloriously northward over Galluzzo at the foot of the sacred hill, past Florence of the brooding dome and rising towers, past Fiesole showing white on the saddle of its hills, to where at last the cloud-shadows darken on a patch of scattered pine and Monte Senario lifts another sanctuary against the heaven of the northern sky. After this it is not wonderful if the cloister well, though ascribed in part to Michelangelo, leaves the visitor



Certosa of Florence.

Notice the ramped and guarded approach rising between the Founder's Lodging on the left and the College on the right.

cold, and if even the glass of Giovanni da Udine, the fresco of Albertinelli, and the wonderful dead Bishop of San Gallo lose much of their colour and form in his memory. The Farmacia brings the anti-climax, and the tourist takes his leave with the bitter-sweet savour of its perfumed Chartreuse as almost the surest thing on which he has kept hold. Yet, if we except the view, which with all its charm is not in any sense the Certosa but only a benediction upon it, all the rest is merely more or less happy addition and accident. The real spirit of the place is other and elsewhere; too remote and subtle to be apprehended save at greater cost than that of a hurried visit under the common conditions of travel. The secret of the Certosa lies buried with its founder; to be recovered only with difficulty and in part, by a careful reconstruction of his purpose with the temporal conditions under which it had its due effect.

His plan of building such a monastery appears first in the will—dated 28th September, 1338—which Niccolò Acciaiuoli signed before setting off for Greece on the dangerous enterprise by which he recovered Achaia for Roberto, eldest son of Catharine de Valois and Filippo di Taranto titular Emperor of Constantinople in right of his wife. His will was, that within a month of his death a monastery of Carthusians, dedicated to San Lorenzo, should be founded in Florence or its neighbourhood, and presently endowed with the rents of all his lands in the Morea. The building was to be pushed on rapidly, and, when ready, to be furnished with books and other necessaries, that as soon as possible the monks might enter, stay and serve within its walls. Here, too, he ordered his tomb, should he die in Tuscany—an order afterwards made absolute—and here desired that Masses should be daily said for the life and fortune of the Empress Catharine, "who set me," he says, "on accomplishing the great good that such a monastery will surely yield," and for the souls of his parents and his own. Returning victorious from Greece, he came to Florence in 1342 to set his plan definitely on foot. The monastery was to house a prior and twelve monks, with four lay-brethren and two clerks. Acciaiuoli reserved for his own use, should he require it, one of the cells to be built; gave the

site on the Monte Acuto between the streams of Ema and Greve, and, departing, left procurators—one of whom was Boccaccio—to represent him in the legal transference of the whole property to the Carthusians.

And so we reach the letters in which Acciaiuoli, from distant Bari and many another place in the kingdom of Naples, gave constant direction for the work on which his heart was set. For his absence from the scene of operations chafed his spirit, and he sought relief in writing and repeating his wishes, till the reader feels himself in close contact with the man as he was in this thing; generous, passionate, impatient of the least delay, careful to the last detail. Here are some extracts: "I wish my burial Chapel to be proceeded with" (1355). "I recommend to you our Monastery, its buildings and strength . . . for myself, I shall only live at the Monastery" (1356). "I am much pleased with your plan of our lodging at the Monastery . . . and think not I grudge the expense, for whereas my other possessions shall pass . . . this, with its decoration, shall be mine for ever, and shall keep green my name in the city, and, if the soul be immortal, as the Chancellor says it is, mine shall rejoice in this, wherever it dwell, wherefore I pray you to hasten." "Set your minds chiefly to make the place impregnable." "Jacopo, I tell you all my comfort lies in our Holy Monastery. . . . I am always thinking of it, and when I do, anger and sadness leave me; had I the means, I would make it the finest thing in Italy . . . if I live four years, and fortune be kind, it shall be beautiful indeed. Such is my madness that I had rather see the lodging you have planned me finished, than enjoy a rent of two hundred *moggia* from the finest corn land about Florence—I might say three hundred—yield then to my weakness, but indeed I think it a virtue." "I wish the garden to be as fine and magnificent as is proper to such a building, and so set that it cannot be entered save by the ways contrived for that purpose." "You cannot make the vaults too high and spacious; for nothing lends such magnificence to a building as great space between floor and roof . . . see to it that by next Lent, if I live and fate allow me, I may dwell there, as I fain would do. God grant me that joy!" (1356). Here we

Well in Cloister, Certosa.

have the man himself, in an autograph which Palmieri, telling of his moderate height, full form, chestnut hair, round bright eyes, nimble ambidexterity of hand and exquisite choice in dress, can only complete; for surely so strong a soul rarely set itself more intently on a single supreme purpose. The message of the letters is brought to its measured close by the latter will and testament of 1358, in which Acciaiuoli provides for the building of twelve more cells to house as many monks; orders within the monastery a College of

The Garden Postern, Certosa.

Theology, Canon Law and Logic, to consist of three professors and fifty students; immensely increases the endowment of the whole, and definitely desires that the Chapel of San Tobia in the Certosa, where his son Lorenzo already lay, should provide the place of his own burial, and that of the male members of his family.

So ends, then, the founder's part in this fabric. But what of those others, hardly to be envied, whom that passionate soul entrusted with the execution of his design? The chief here was the "Jacopo" of the letters; Fra Jacopo Passavanti, to whom the rest must look for orders. Now this Dominican, the Prior of Santa

Maria Novella, was a past master in the direction of such matters. In his own convent he had called Andrea Orcagna to paint the chancel, and, probably, to collaborate with the Gaddi in covering with fresco the walls of the "Spanish Chapel," then the chapter house, which Fra Jacopo Talenti da Nipozzano, the convent architect, had raised at the will and by the liberality of Domenico Guidalotti. Now when we remember that Talenti had a brother Francesco, and by him a nephew Simone, both of whom were employed on the Duomo, the Campanile and the Loggia dei Lanzi, it is not difficult to see who would be, in all probability, the *maestri* at work on the Certosa under Passavanti's direction; or who completed this fabric when he was no more.

More important by far is it to understand clearly the fundamental idea of the builders; the type of structure to which they conformed their plan. Two elements determined it; one the nature of the site, and the other Acciaiuoli's wishes that the Certosa should contain a grand lodging for his residence, and that the whole should be strongly fortified. For, as we think of these conditions—a building set on a hill-site, comprising the castle of a Count, a church, and a group of some five-and-twenty humbler dwellings; the whole composing a true and evident strength—we begin to remember that something like this we have met before in the Contado of Florence. The feudal noble had early chosen the hill as the site of his defensible dwelling; presently his people did the same; together they built the church at a point convenient for both, and thus, under constraint of troubled times, was naturally evolved, in as many charming variants as there were varieties of site in such hill-towns, the type of the *castello;* the fortified village so characteristic of the early Middle Ages.

The castello, then, was the model from which the builders of the Certosa worked, but, that we may understand the result, it is necessary to follow the matter out more fully before coming to the actual building in question. For the castello had a long history of its own, and already, ere the Certosa was thought of, had gone far towards the type of the later mediæval fortress; what we generally mean when we speak of a castle. To begin with, the castello

was largely fortuitous; a knot of houses or towers (in these days there was little distinction) set, each as the ground might give foothold, about the hill crown, and careful to keep rank only so far as to offer in their own fabrics a continuous fairly defensible wall to the outside. Within, open space was of course saved for a Piazza, occupied in part by the church, and closed at one end by the grander, stronger fabric of the Conte who ruled the whole. Access to the castello was had, in general, by an arched way, opening under some principal building and thus easily defensible.

Now it is plain that, if additions were to be made, the *castello* thus planned could only have them in the form of fresh towers for dwelling pushed out here and there beyond the close ring already built; for it would generally happen that the free space of the Piazza was already too small to suffer further reduction. And soon, in war, the unstudied advantage of such projections would make itself felt as a ready means of directing a flanking discharge of missiles along the intervening spaces. So, as time passed, and castles came to be built, not at haphazard, but after a regular plan, they were laid out in an oblong or oval of wall, broken every here and there by flanking towers. Such a castle reproduced the defence formed by the houses in the primitive *castello;* while their value as dwellings was now transformed to another group of buildings, houses rather than towers as crouching low behind the encircling walls; and these houses the new plan set, for the most part, on either side of a street, stretching across the *enceinte* from gate to gate. A fair example of this later plan of fortress may be found in Malmantile, midway between Lastra and Montelupo by the hill road.

Coming then at last to the Certosa, we find in it neither the earlier nor the later type of the *castello*, but, as it were, a compromise between them. This may be considered the natural result of its being as a convent; to which, not the transverse street of the later castle, but the traditional cloister in an open square was alone suitable; thus, in respect of its humbler dwellings, throwing it back on the lines of the earlier type. Of the later we find little more than a suggestion, in the general shape, as of a rough quad-

rangle, carried out in the walls which enclose the convent to east and west and north. On the east these walls show three or four towers irregularly placed, partly as buttresses against the slope, and partly as defences to command the road. These were probably higher when first built, and we may suppose the walls to have been crenellated throughout. At the wall-base a level has been formed all round the Certosa ready for the stockade which would enclose it in time of war, and this is nearly all we see of the formal fortress of the age. The earlier type of *castello* on the other hand, sufficiently declares itself here. The readiest access to the place is from the south end of the hill, and at this point the *enceinte* is at once broken and closed by the dwelling, or rather castle, contrived for the founder's residence. Here the buildings are themselves the wall, as they used to be everywhere in early times; they affirm themselves in solid masses and imposing shape above the outward *batter* of their substructures, evidently designed at once for strength on such a slope, and to keep the enemy far from the true wall-base. The Acciaiuoli lodging is broken in two, and set in separate blocks that face each other across a wide Piazza; the one to the west meant for the founder's dwelling, the other to give room in its substructures for stables and servants, and above for the college to be established here. As many an ancient gateway is set between a pair of towers, so here the road of approach rises in successive ramps, well exposed to missiles from above, and, checked half-way by a strong gate tower, reaches the Piazza just between its two *corps de logis*. At the turn of the ramp, where it gains a smaller open court behind the gate tower, a way leads into the lower storey of the lodging on the one hand, and on the other a stair falls through a charming brick buttress lighted by a rose window in stone. This stair was probably the private access to the garden of which Acciaiuoli wrote, and we may see a trace of the garden itself in the hollow turf *ricreatorio*, cut at no great distance in the slope beneath. Beyond the principal Piazza lie the church and *clausura*; the latter expanding behind the church to form the great cloister. Here the four vaulted arcades in front of the cells are of later date, as their style

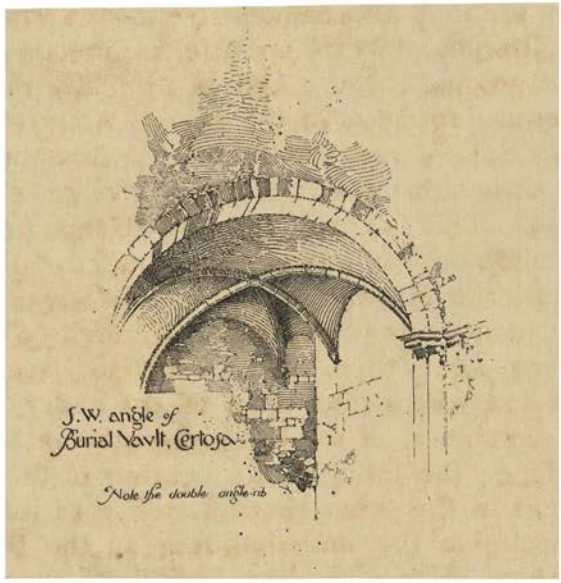
and decoration sufficiently show, but we may still notice the way in which the cells themselves, though they have lost their primitive character, crowd outwards against the fortress walls, which at more than one point they fairly occupy. As one looks obliquely to the north-east, for example, along the west wall, the outbuildings of the cells so confuse their lines with those of the wall itself as to recall fairly the earlier type of *castello;* to which indeed the whole Certosa was a kind of belated reversion.

Passing from the general type to its treatment here in detail, we find, as is natural, that the style of the Certosa, where what is original can be separated from later additions, is just the Florentine Gothic of the later fourteenth century. In the Acciaiuoli—now called the Pope's—lodging almost everything visible is comparatively recent; but on the upper floor some vaults still lift their crowns through the pavement to show that the low *Baroque* ceiling of the great saloon beneath is a later addition, and that here the

Founder might have enjoyed just that ample magnificence of space, spread under soaring arches, which his soul desired. The opposite block has been less altered, and the vaulting, with its Gothic ribs and carved keystones, still remains as an open example of what the whole must once have been.

But it is, naturally, in the Church of the Certosa, with its adjoining chapels, that the builder's style affirms itself most fully. Let us take the structure of these buildings first. Gothic of every kind proclaims itself most fully in constructive device, without depending on the help of ornament to show us what it is; delighting in difficulties, while making true architecture of the craft it employs to overcome them. And of difficulty there was no lack here. The crowning ridge of the Monte Acuto seems to lie eastward from the axis of these buildings, so that the Church stands on the edge of a slope that falls sharply to meet the rising road from Galluzzo. This fall in the ground at once provides room for, and renders necessary as a continuous buttress, the Burial Vault, which, at a lower level and in three unequal bays—very Gothic this detail of the plan—closely adjoins the Church on the east. Nor is this all. Two points there would seem to have been of special danger; the first where the corner of the heavy façade—now the *inner* wall, remember, of the late sixteenth-century atrium—overhangs the slope; the other at the bearing of the eastern pilaster that takes half of the great chancel arch with its outward thrust. When we examine the underbuilding in the Burial Vaults, we see at once how these difficulties have been resolved in the true Gothic spirit. In the first bay the normal diagonal rib is doubled, and is thrown, opening outwards, to take charge of the façade above at its weak point, leading the force that would make it slip gently downwards through the strong vaulting to meet the sufficient stay of a reëntering wall-angle and external batter. The last bay —that of the four family tombs—is markedly smaller and stronger than the rest; it falls below the east side of the Chancel arch in the Church above, and the space between is filled by the massive underbuilding of the Campanile. The whole thus forms a sufficient buttress for the Chancel arch, in which buttress the terminal chapel

of the tombs is, as it were, carved out; its east wall with the outside batter thus gaining just the hollow flying character proper to a true Gothic support. In all this construction much help comes from the rectangular reinforcement brought to the Burial Vault by the Chapel of the Virgin. For here again are strong underbuildings which bring the Church façade into true touch with the great eastern wall of *enceinte* and its buttress towers. This Chapel was the gift of the Founder's cousin, Cardinal Angelo Acciaiuoli



Bishop of Florence—who died in 1408—and so has quite extraordinary interest as a very late example of pure Florentine Gothic which yet shows, in the Greek cross of its plan, a fundamental character soon to develop into the new building style of the Renaissance.

For its decoration Italian Gothic in general depended far more on fresco than on sculpture; for the southern architect looked to colour as a relief in his wall spaces rather than to tracery, or the light and shade given to archivolts and capitals and vaulting bosses by the cunning carver in quaint stone. Sculpture there

is, however, at the Certosa; on the capitals of the Church and of the Virgin's Chapel, and in the cutting of their rib profiles; repeated too in the three unequal bays which the restorer has spared between the atrium and the Chapel of the Beato. And if, below, in the Burial Vaults, severe low-browed simplicity rules the style, are there not sculptured tombs in the Chapel of San Tobia, and does not Orcagna's work for the Founder's burial chest bracketed and canopied on the wall, where Acciaiuoli rests, still at arms, over the splendour and pathos of his own heraldry, shine with at least as true and sure effect as the same artist's gaudier work in the shrine of Or San Michele? To compare the decorative detail in Santa Maria del Fiore, Or San Michele, and the Loggia dei Lanzi with what we find at the Certosa is to study the work of a definite group of Florentine craftsmen, one of whom, and not the least brilliant, was Orcagna, who so filled the mind and memory of his time as to absorb, and have reckoned for long as his, much of what Talenti produced. It can be proved, as we have said, that Passavanti employed these artists at Santa Maria Novella, and there is a strong probability that they were the *maestri* whom he called to the Certosa. No wonder then that, like much else, this fabric came to be ascribed to Orcagna alone.

But enough of Art; it is time we turned to see what all this has to do with our principal subject; the life and substantial fortunes of the Florentine State. The link that joins, as with a band of steel, the commerce of the city to her costly Certosa is none other than the splendid strenuous life of the Founder of this Convent. Which life then, in its main lines, we now proceed to examine.

Commercial interests are what meet us at the very outset. Acciaiuolo, the father of Niccolò, had set up in the opening years of the fourteenth century a house of business at Naples; a branch, as it were, of the original company of the Acciaiuoli which Leone di Riccomanno had already founded at Florence. The dealings of the house were in grain, the produce of southern Italy and Sicily; its chief market lay in the north, and even beyond the Alps, and,

like other Florentine traders, the Acciaiuoli did banking business as well. In the line of finance it was that Acciaiuolo found his great opportunity during the wars carried on in the south by King Robert, whom he supplied with money, and who, in grati-

tude, made him Royal Chamberlain and Councillor in 1323, besides granting him the more substantial benefits of an Apulian barony and the Viceroyalty of Prato, estimated at ten thousand gold florins of rent.

At the time of which we speak, Niccolò, only son of this fortunate merchant, was already thirteen years old, having been

born at Monte Gufoni in 1310; and both his father's position, and the causes which had led to it, were already at work to determine, in large measure, the boy's future life and destiny. The Florentine youth of these days was precocious, and at the early age of eighteen Niccolò was not only married, but on his way to the south; his father's representative in the conduct of the house at Naples.

The example of Acciaiuolo taught his son to deal with affairs in a liberal spirit, and to look high for his chief earthly rewards; nor was it long till opportunity came to Niccolò as it had come to his father, and with the offer of still more splendid advantage. King Robert, mindful of the past, attached him to the person of the young Louis of Taranto, a lad of fifteen about to ride with five hundred horse into the wilds of Calabria. Behold then the merchant become a knight, and, at his return from an expedition in which he had done all that was expected of him, a personage indeed; being now, by favour of the King, Royal Chamberlain; High Justiciar; the possessor of a good Barony in the south; his father's heir in the Vicariate of Prato, and—a privilege he probably valued more than all—Governor of the Tarantese and Tutor of its Princes. For this last honour it was that kept him near the person of their widowed mother, Catharine of Valois, who held him in high favour, and exercised an extraordinary influence over his mind and life. It was she who first suggested to Niccolò the idea of the Certosa, as he himself tells us in his former will.

In this relation to the Princes of Taranto and their mother, Acciaiuoli found a second opportunity of distinguishing himself. We have already noticed how, in 1338, he passed to Greece, and on what errand. The Empress Catharine and Prince Robert were of the party; success crowned the bold attempt; and when Acciaiuoli returned to Italy he bore the titles of various baronies in the Morea conferred on him by the grateful Empress for whom he had done so much. So began a connection with Greece which, as the years went on, was to prove increasingly fruitful.

King Robert, Acciaiuoli's first patron, died in 1343, leaving as

his heiress the well-known Queen Joanna, about whom, as was only too natural, a web of intrigue presently gathered. This we have, fortunately, no need to unravel. It is enough to notice that plans for the Queen's marriage to one or other of the Tarantine princes were early on foot. Acciaiuoli, in his quality as trusted counsellor of the family, had a share, probably considerable, in these negotiations; on which the Papal Court looked with disapproval. Essentially a man of action, and prompt to take any reasonable risk, he cut in consummate fashion the Gordian knot, and Louis of Taranto became Joanna's husband in 1347. But the King of Hungary had pretensions to the crown of Naples. He entered Italy in force; the discontented drew to his standard at Benevento; Joanna took ship for Provence, while her husband was carried by the faithful Acciaiuoli to a safe refuge at Monte Gufoni, till he too could find his way to Avignon.

We are now arrived at the *nadir* touched by fortune in this story; henceforth its progress leads upward into light and onward to new success. When the Prince and Acciaiuoli reached Avignon they found Joanna in the prison of a province where she was feudal superior. Acciaiuoli addressed himself to the Pope with all the policy of which he was master, and soon affairs took a better turn. The Queen lay in prison because her vassals feared she might sell Provence to the French. Instead, it was now arranged that Avignon should pass at an easy price to the Church, and that in return the Pope should crown Louis King of Naples. Having thus secured for his patrons both money and a valid title, Acciaiuoli set sail for Naples as an *avant courrier* to prepare the return of the King and Queen. He hired in their interest the famous band of fortune commanded by the German Duke Warner, under whose protection Louis and Joanna made good their landing, and entered Naples in triumph; Acciaiuoli now bearing that title of Grand Seneschal which his services to the kingdom had certainly deserved. In the long wars that followed ere the Hungarian resistance was overcome, his qualities as a leader of men, his large command of money, and his political astuteness, alike made Acciaiuoli indispensable. He found pay for the troops to the sum

of thirty-three thousand gold florins; he met and out-manœuvred the Papal Legate, and, wounded treacherously by Lungotto, he even shed his blood in the cause of his masters' honour. The wide lands now given him in Nocera, Salerno and the Basilicata; with the titles of Count Palatine and Count of Melfi, were not too great a recompense for what he had done and suffered.

It might seem as if Acciaiuoli, now become a great noble in the south, with a thousand interests both there and in distant Greece, were for ever separated from the city of his birth, not to speak of the mercantile connections and habits of his early years. Yet the matter of the Certosa itself is enough to show that this was not so; and the affair of Prato, in 1351, drew the ancient bond still closer, while giving us to see him still the clever man of business, acting wisely in the interests alike of his native city and of the King and Queen in whose service he now lived. Prato, as we know, had long been a royal domain administered by the Acciaiuoli as Viceroys of Naples. Lying at the gates of Florence, it became the Naboth's vineyard of that prosperous place, which ventured to occupy it by force of arms in 1350. Here, then, was a fine opportunity for diplomacy, and on a business footing; for Florence was wealthy and the kingdom of Naples in sad need of money. The Seneschal arranged the matter easily enough through his trusted Florentine correspondents. The city entered into full rights over Prato, the Crown of Naples received 17,500 gold florins, and Acciaiuoli the warm thanks of both parties to the bargain, which was concluded in the Palazzo della Signoria on the 23rd February, 1351, with Boccaccio as one of the witnesses.

In the south, there was need not only of money but of peace, and of that security without which commerce becomes an impossibility. The Hungarian was still in the land, and a band of free lances under Beltramo della Motta terrorised the country up to the gates of Naples. So the Seneschal passed the Apennines and brought back at cost four hundred troops led by Malatesta of Rimini. Thus the roads were cleared for the coronation of King Louis in 1352; on which occasion the Florentines sent an embassy with instructions to ask the help of Acciaiuoli in obtaining a relic

of Santa Reparata for the Duomo, and protection for their merchants dwelling in Naples from the pretensions and persecutions of a certain Minutoli, who had cast several into prison. We may hope, and indeed believe, that the Seneschal's influence was more potent in the material than in the spiritual matter; for it seems that here the Florentines were notably tricked by the Abbess of Tiano, who sent them, with tears at its loss, an arm of the saint made all of wood and gesso: a fact they did not discover till the pretended relic had been adored in the Duomo for several years!

Brigandage on the large scale was then the curse of the Neapolitan State, and formed a tradition of lawless deeds which has persisted even as late as our own times. The company of Beltramo is no sooner done with than we hear of the Conte Lando; of Luigi di Durazzo (1355-6); of the Conte di Minervino (1358); and of Anichino da Mongardo (1360); who each in turn, with more or less to say for themselves, gathered their parties of mercenaries or broken men, and fought their guerilla wars to the harm of the State in the persons of its peaceful and industrious subjects. All the rest of his life the Grand Seneschal, in the midst of greater affairs, was busy in suppressing these bandits; now hiring troops to put them down; now buying them off with money; once at least coming to terms—with Conte Lando in 1356—at a great boar hunt in the hills of Melfi, then white with snow, followed by a banquet in the castle which notably smoothed the way to peace. This was the velvet glove, but the iron hand beneath it was seen two years later when the Conte di Minervino hung, a corpse, from his own walls at Altamura. And once and again, by sending grants of money and troops of horse to Acciaiuoli, the city of Florence acknowledged both the great work he was about and her own interest therein.

Meanwhile this energy and capacity were, one would have thought, fully engaged in still greater matters. Take the affair of Sicily for example. That distracted island, long a prey to civil war and, in 1354, to famine, called for the strong hand of a new governor. The Acciaiuoli had a special interest there, for it was one of their chief collecting grounds for grain, where peaceful agriculture must by no means fail lest Rainuccio Lapi da Uzzano,

or his successor, their agent at Palermo, find no more cargoes of wheat to send in bottoms of Marseilles to the Monte Argentario, to Pisa, or to the Ligurian ports. So Acciaiuoli contrived that the island should invite the rule of his master, and, himself, not once nor twice, in 1354, 1356, and 1362, passed the strait at the head of expeditions which, partly by the grain they carried to feed the famine-stricken at Palermo and Syracuse, and partly by force of arms at Messina and Catania, finally subdued the whole to the crown of Naples. These expeditions gained for their bold and astute commander the new title of Count of Malta and Gozzo.

In Greece too Acciaiuoli made his hand felt, strengthening the castle of Corinth against the raids of Turks and Catalans in 1358, and leading back the Achaian refugees to people again the old wastes in peace; with what advantage to the eastern trade one can easily guess. But perhaps the most signal proof of this man's capacity and purpose was seen in the service he rendered to the cause of the Guelphs in Northern Italy. In 1360 Florence stood in fear of what might be preparing beyond the Apennines. Bologna, the key of her northern road, was now the apple of discord to which two great powers pretended; the Visconti of Milan and Malatesta of Rimini; the latter acting for Cardinal Albornoz and his master the Pope. Thus, between them, Lombardy and the whole Romagna were in a flame. Meanwhile the King of Naples sent Acciaiuoli to pay his duty to Innocent VI, and to dissipate a suspicion that had arisen against him in the Pontiff's mind. So well did he perform this charge that, at Pentecost, he received the Golden Rose; and the Pope, having tasted his quality, induced him to accept the title of Rector of Bologna and the Romagna in the interests of the Church. Thus committed to a principal part in these troubles, Acciaiuoli acted, as was his wont, promptly and with success. In August he was at Milan, opening a treaty with the Duke; from Modena he informed Florence by letter, as a party chiefly concerned in the matter, of the terms agreed on; in November, with great pomp and in the Cardinal's company, he rode into Bologna as Papal Governor of that City and Province. The fact that, still distrusting Visconti, he now

sought to form a Guelphic League against him with Florence at its head, shows how steadily and earnestly he sought, in all, to further the interests of his native town.

Nor are we to suppose that Florence was either blind or ungrateful. It is true that the civic elections of 1361, had they stood alone, might have led us to think differently. For then, by a curious accident, the name of Acciaiuoli being the only one left in the *borse* of the *scrutinio*, he should, according to rule, have been appointed, automatically, to the office of the Priorate. But the tyranny of the Duke of Athens (1343)—a woe that came to Florence from the south—was still fresh in men's memories; and so, very much because of the commanding position Acciaiuoli had gained at Naples, and now at Bologna, the city passed a law declaring that his great charges in foreign States made it impossible he should serve her as Prior; and that in future no feudal magnate should be eligible for a place in the Government of Florence. At the same time they helped him to find three hundred horse, with which he rode to break, at Salerno and Atella, the brigands of Anichino—the preoccupation of the moment—and three years later, on the 17th of May, 1364, the Signoria declared him "free, immune and exempt, for his whole life, from any and every tax, imposed or to be imposed, in the City or territory of Florence; likeas from any penalty or surtax, past or future, in respect of the non-payment of, or delay in paying, such tax; nor shall he be molested of the City in person or goods by any exaction or execution whatsoever; and if anything be enacted contrary to the aforesaid provisions, it shall, *ipso jure*, be void and of none effect." Truly, if the inhibition of 1361 was but the sharp Florentine way of letting Acciaiuoli know his native city was only too well aware of his greatness, this Act of 1364 brought him a full acknowledgment of her sense that he had used that position to render Florence services that were not so much eminent as unique.

This, then, seems the moment when, as the life of Acciaiuoli draws to its sudden and splendid close, we may well pause to consider its real meaning in relation to the city of his birth—a relation which can only be described as epoch-making. Two

distinct ages had hitherto marked the story of Florentine commerce. In the twelfth century the city had succeeded in setting free her trade within the bounds of the Contado by subduing the feudal nobility there who would have strangled its early efforts and progress. In the following age Florence had taken a wider field, and held her own by road and river against the mercantile rivalry of neighbouring cities, like Pisa and Siena, which sought to keep her from Rome, the sea, and the south. Now opens a third epoch which at once completes the past and prepares for the future. Florence learns that her commerce depends, in its wider life, not so much on the power to subdue foreign States as on the skill to make use of them; that their prosperity was an important element in her advantage; and so, finally, that she may even find her interest in sending money and troops to help an alien power. This was the lesson Acciaiuoli taught her, with Naples, Sicily and Greece as his objects; and never so well as when he threw himself, to her advantage, between the Pope and the Visconti; for then the Florentines, who had already learned that peace was better than war, thus saw how powerful policy might be in securing peace, and so the material prosperity that follows that happy condition. Thus the activity of Acciaiuoli in every direction worked for the coming *Humanity* of the fifteenth century, even as his policy anticipated that other, less virile and honest, which by the subtlety of its success won for Lorenzo dei Medici the name of the balance-needle of Italy.

Acciaiuoli died at Naples in 1365, full of honours if not of years. Lorenzo, his son, who had predeceased him in 1354, he had brought by ship to Pisa, and by barge from Pisa to Florence, laying him to rest in the Certosa with all the pomp and circumstance of the most splendid military funeral that the city had yet seen. And now the body of the father comes to lie beside that of the son; we know not with what honours, train or trappings, what mourning heralds, broken wands, and panoply of woe; nor does it greatly signify. Enough that the sea bear him and the river bring him home; for so the great Proconsul of Commerce moves to his rest, as is fitting, by that free water-way which the Acciaiuoli keels had so often

ploughed : the wide and noiseless road which this man had done so much to fill with sails and freight from south and east. He lies in his own chosen Certosa at last—he who, living, found time to build, but never to inhabit there. So the strong face, that Orcagna

Cemetery cross, Certosa.

carved so well, sleeps to the murmur of Ema and Greve; and as the years and centuries pass, his own words, spoken of this place, seem more and more prophetic. "This alone shall be mine," he said; "this shall keep my name green"; for indeed the larger fame is forgotten till we force ourselves to recall it, and Acciaiuoli lives for us to-day as the Founder of the Certosa of Florence.

CHAPTER III

OR SAN MICHELE AND THE ART OF SILK

NO single building of the city is so intimately associated with the whole commercial life of Florence as the Church of Or San Michele. Raised under the care of one of her greatest Guilds—that of the Por' Santa Maria—and meant to provide a municipal storehouse for corn, as well as a place of worship, its pilasters were early appropriated to the principal Trade Guilds, which decorated them with figures of their respective patron saints, and went there in pious pilgrimage, each on the day of its yearly *festa*. Thus Or San Michele became the meeting-place of the trades, and the focal point of the Florentine commerce at its highest and best. As such we may well look at it for a little before studying that great department of industry which must presently engage our attention in the Guild of Silk.

The site of Or San Michele had been sacred from very early times. A parchment of 895 tells us it was then occupied by an oratory of St. Michael and by a convent of nuns, the foundation, many years before, of a certain Pietro, who had given it to the famous Abbey of Nonantola. In this deed of 895 Leopardo Abbot of Nonantola asserts his privilege by electing the Abbess of San Michele at Florence in the person of Alda daughter of Marino, and it is extremely interesting to find that she is taken bound to furnish five good shirts yearly, to be made of wool sent from Nonantola, and to keep twelve girls at work in the convent on woollen and linen fabrics for behoof of the Abbey. We have already (p. 152) noticed that the religious houses were the early seats of industrial combination, especially in weaving. Here, in a concrete example, we see this germ of Florentine manufacture and commerce as it existed in the ninth century: the pack-mules and men crossing the

Apennines in August to carry wool to Florence for the winter's work, and returning to bring Nonantola the fabrics finished during the previous year. Thus, in this early industry, commerce and manufactures may be said to have set their seal on this particular Florentine site from the very first.

In 1100 San Michele was already a Parish Church and distinguished as "in Orto." This ancient building the Commune cleared away—it is said in 1239 and not without protest from Nonantola—to make room for an open piazza where grain might be gathered and sold. Its altar had lain to the east, and the foundations of the ancient apse were lately seen when laid bare by excavations for drainage in the line of Via Calzaiuoli.

On the piazza thus formed there presently rose a loggia for the grain market; completed before 1290, and which Vasari says was designed by Arnolfo di Cambio. This building is said to have been of brick, with segmental arches between the pilasters, supporting quadripartite vaults and covered with a projecting wooden roof like that of the Bigallo. Its ground plan was probably arranged on lines like those of the present Church, but over a smaller area, and it is certain that the houses of the Galagai and Abati pressed it closely on two sides.

To the latter family belonged that Neri, Prior of San Piero Scheraggio, who committed the great arson of 1304. The houses set on fire were those closely adjoining the market, and, in explaining the destruction of Arnolfo's Loggia, the chroniclers add to this contiguity the curious fact that the market was full of *ex votos* of wax hung to its pilasters. To understand their presence we must remember that the market had borrowed a semi-sacred character from its site. When the old Church was destroyed, its altar-piece of St. Michael was hung under the Loggia, and one of the pilasters, probably that at the south-east corner, was decorated with a fresco of the Virgin. This latter work of art drew the devotions of a Society of Laudesi, constituted under name of the Madonna of Or San Michele in 1291. In 1292 the fame ran that many miracles had been wrought in connection with this picture and devotion: hence, as the years went on, the Benintendi

had more and more to do; for it was they chiefly who distinguished themselves as clever modellers of *ex votos* for this shrine; thus earning the name of Fallimagini. The number of these images was so great in 1304 that, when the fire caught them, they contributed not a little to the destruction of the Loggia, which seems to have been very complete. The picture of St. Michael, being on wood, of course perished, as did the wooden roof; and even the brickwork was so damaged that it had to be cleared away, except indeed the south-east pilaster, spared for the sake of its fresco, which must however have been sadly burnt and blackened if not entirely destroyed. A temporary wooden shed was put up for the market, and a rough enclosure raised about the Madonna of the pillar in guise of an oratory, and so the matter stayed for more than thirty years while Florence was too busy with war abroad to think of building at home.

In 1335 the long pause was broken by the appointment of a *balìa* or executive commission to rebuild the Loggia. Three years later the civic mind was made up, and found expression in the Councils of the Capitano del Popolo and the Podestà, which, on the 23rd September, 1336, authorised the Signoria to provide a new building here, where grain might be conveniently stored and the famous Madonna decently worshipped, as the place was in the very heart of Florence and had been the scene of notorious miracles. The ground was accordingly cleared, the plan formed, and, on July 29th, 1337, the Bishop of Florence blessed the first stone in presence of the Signoria, the Judges, and Ambassadors; while medals of gold and silver were struck with the significant legend: "To show forth the magnificence of the Arts and craftsmen of the Florentine People; to whom, and to whose Republic, be honour and glory."

We may permit ourselves to suppose, what is indeed most probable, that the foundation-stone lay at the south-east corner; and that about it gathered almost at once the building of that bay; so set as to enclose in its very centre the sacred remains of the Virgin's pillar. For thus, from the very first, a handsome oratory would be provided for the Madonna, easily accessible from the

south and east; while on the north and west the rest of the new loggia was steadily rising in the strength and beauty of its dressed stone pilasters, arches and vaults. And, plainly, if the angle of Arnolfo's building fell in the centre of the new corner bay, then either the earlier Loggia stood more to the north and west, or, more probably, was smaller than the present Church by full ten feet in every direction.

It is not easy to say who was the author of the new and grander plan. The Signoria at once delegated the matter of Or San Michele to the Guild of Por' Santa Maria, with whom it would lie to choose an architect: the best, we may be sure, that Florence could furnish. For we are not only to remember the spirit in which the work was undertaken, but the competence of those who made the appointment. This of the Por' Santa Maria was a Guild which included, with the workers of silk, the gold and silversmiths accustomed to form designs that only needed enlargement to make them monumental; and able, as they soon proved, to advise with general applause and acceptance even the builders of the Cathedral itself. Vasari tells us the task was put in the hands of Taddeo Gaddi, but, so far from supporting him, the documents reveal so many errors in his account of Or San Michele that this ascription may well be suspected. Franceschini (1892) suggests Francesco Talenti, and if there must be a name we may rest content with his; remembering him author of the capitals in S. Maria del Fiore; noting their correspondence with those of Or San Michele; and adding the undoubted fact that his son Simone was chosen in 1367 to continue the earlier work of the Loggia by closing its arches with tracery. Benci di Cione may well have been Talenti's coadjutor here.

Much more interesting and important is it to determine the leading architectural idea of the building, which may be done without much difficulty or hesitation. The first purpose it must fulfil was that of a market and store for grain; and in this direction there was no want in Florence of a recognised building-type ready to be chosen and developed here. The characteristic sale-room of the city, as we have already pointed out (p. 74), was

the vaulted basement of the tower; always more or less open to the street; and its store was a compartment contrived above, either as a *mezzanino*, or, when still more room was required, the first, or first and second storeys of the tower itself. This then was the building unit for the purpose in hand, which only needed multiplying and slight modification to meet the larger public and civic needs of the case. Or San Michele then is, in essence, simply a close-set group of six such towers; their united basements forming an open vaulted Loggia, and their first and second storeys a sufficient grain store; where the normal party walls have shrunk to their least possible expression, becoming pilasters; and have drawn up their curtains in the form of arches under vault and roof to open the widest free floor space that the conditions of stability would admit. The same reason shows at once why this tower-group differed from that normal to Florence in being close-set; as obviously any open central court would have led to loss of floor space above, just where such space was most essential.

The contrivance which provided access from the ground level of the Loggia to these upper floors, and that by which the grain was raised and lowered, are significant of the same ruling idea. In the Florentine towers a ladder placed alongside one of the walls within the basement had led to an opening in the vault, and so to the level of the first floor. This was in the earlier time. Later, a party wall enclosed a regular staircase of stone, set in the same position as the primitive ladder, but now opening independently on the street by a high and narrow doorway close beside the wider basement arch;[1] while above, the primitive vault opening was continued as a convenient way of raising or lowering goods from or to the shop by means of a rope. Now, allowing for the modification rendered necessary by the peculiar grouping of its tower units, this is just the arrangement we find at Or San Michele. The north-west tower is the one that has been chosen to provide the stair. At the outer corner its walls have, as it were, shrunk

[1] An example of this arrangement may be seen in the Palazzo Da Castiglione, Via S. Miniato tra le Torri.

Interior of Or San Michele N.W. corner

Notice the grain measure carved over door of stair, and the drop-hole in arch above

together into a solid pilaster that leaves the Loggia open; yet not symmetrically, for they are still longer from east to west than from north to south. In this pilaster the stair climbs; gathered as the walls gather, for it must follow their lead—two steps to north, and four to east; and two to south, and four again to west—so, turn upon turn, one gains the Sala di Dante from the Church; and the second floor above that, and, at last, the roof; while the door that admits to the stair from the Church is just the narrow door of the old Florentine house, with a *moggia* carved in the tympanum of its tiny arch to tell what is in store above and on sale below. And the grain itself, how is it raised and lowered? Why, as privately and of old, in sacks, and by a rope. For if, standing before the little door with its grain measure, you look up to the broad arch overhead, you notice at once a break in the colour that clothes its surface where cement has closed the ancient drop-hole. Just above, its presence is marked by a stone and ring in the pavement of the first floor; and, plumb above that again, another opening in the higher arch communicates in the same way with the upper granary on the second floor. Set a pulley over this in the roof beams and the whole arrangement is complete in its simplicity; being the mere transference hither of a use that the towers had long known and employed.

The second purpose of the new building—that of providing for the Laudesi, and generally, for all those whom the miraculous Madonna drew to her pillared shrine—need not detain us long, as, in great part, it was fulfilled in the arrangements we have already noticed. It is to be observed that not till 1357—twenty years, that is, after the plan was commissioned—was it agreed that the grain market should be held elsewhere, and the Loggia of Or San Michele reserved and dedicated as a Church. At first there was probably no idea that more space would be needed here for religious purposes than that of the south-east bay, which had been built so as to enclose very exactly the ancient pillar with its shrine. The plan had probably been to screen this off, at least on the north and west, from the adjoining market bays by grilles of wrought iron;

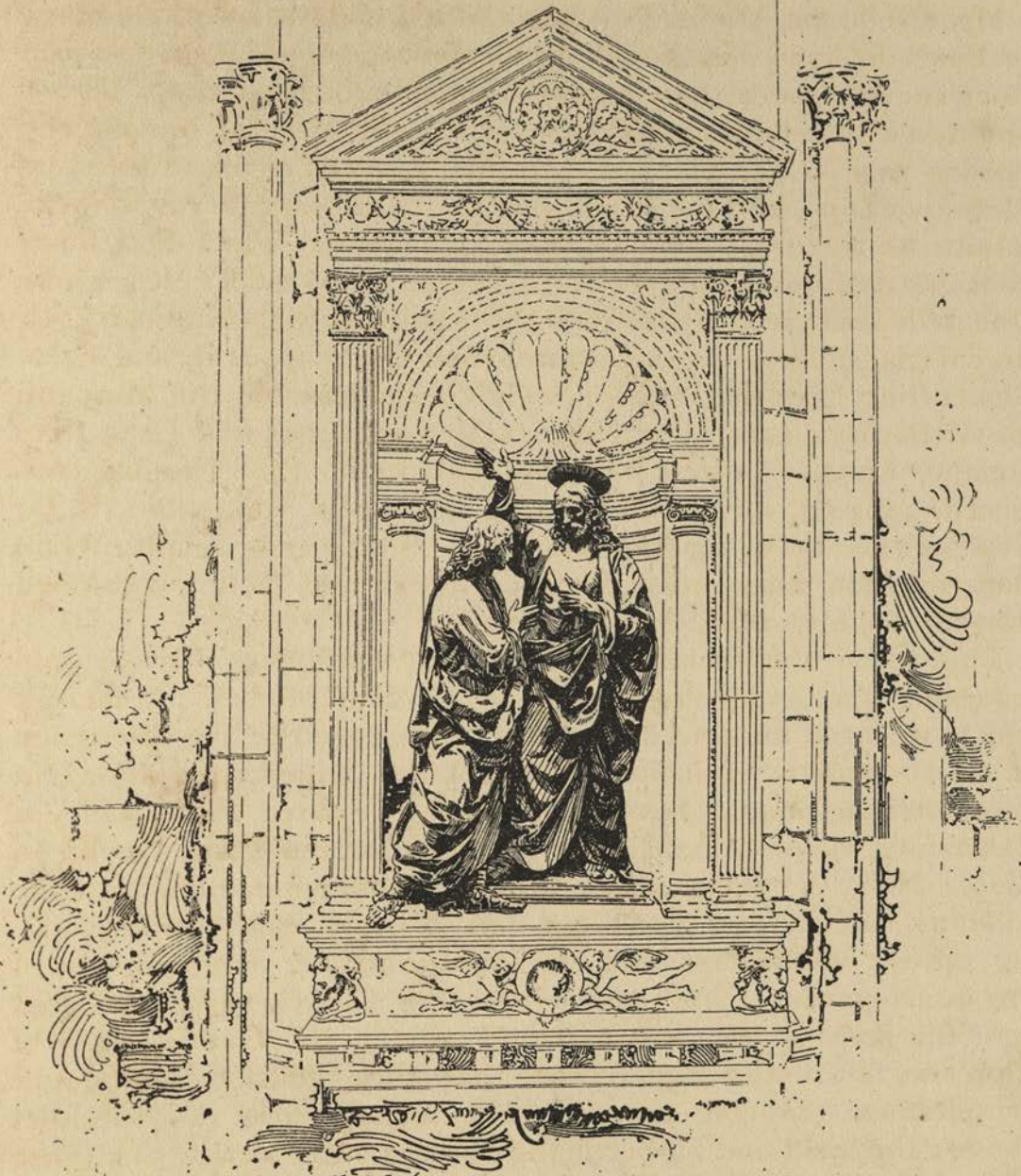
leaving an open access on the east and south. When therefore it was resolved to form the whole into a Church there was no difficulty in extending this plan, and carrying it out in stone, so as to fill the bounding arches of the building on every side. A Church composed of two aisles, and these of equal height, was certainly an anomaly, and one for which the intended use of the place as a market was responsible. But, on the other hand, if we have been right in deriving the system of ecclesiastical vaulting from a civil source; and finding this in the dwelling-tower, which first became a campanile, and then carried its vault by intrusion into the aisle (see p. 119), we must think it a fortunate coincidence that the building chosen for conversion from a secular to a sacred use was one framed from the first as Or San Michele had been; and offering therefore on the ground level six ample bays roofed by continuous vaulting not less suitable to a Church because built for another purpose. Simple combination for civil ends here effects in a moment what intrusion, suggestion and multiplication had taken ages to bring about in ecclesiastical building; but the prime element is the same, and the result so similar as to be immediately adaptable. This easy interchange of function visible at Or San Michele is a striking proof that every continuous vaulting, whether of Church or Loggia, may safely be traced back through all the lines of its development to the simple vault that roofed the basement of the early towers.

The adaptation of the whole Loggia as a Church was neither sudden nor unprepared for. The Arte della Seta had taken the first step towards it when, in 1339, they told the Signoria that some of the pilasters were already finished; others in course of building; and suggested that, in the fourteen outward faces which these presented to the street, the principal Arts of Florence should be invited to set tabernacles, where, on their feast days, they might worship their respective patron saints. Thus a kind of holy garth, which, as time went on, became a very garland of art, was drawn about the whole building, and in a way which must soon have suggested its complete separation from secular use. A further step was taken in 1349, when the Laudesi of Or San Michele called

Orcagna to give their famous Madonna of the pillar a suitable shrine. There was no want of money; for the great pest of the year before, passing, had left the devout ready to pour out their thankofferings here as elsewhere in the city; so, for ten years to come, Orcagna gathered his marbles, formed them to his design, inlaid their delicate whiteness with colour and gold, and gave them their highest value as the material of his own patient and exquisite sculpture. When the whole came to be fitted together—a work carried out without cement of any kind and therefore not complete till 1366—the fair result stood in the centre of the south-east bay, the very site of Arnolfo's pillar, hitherto spared because of the figure it carried. Now, we can hardly suppose that the Laudesi would allow Orcagna to remove this, so great was their own and the popular veneration for what it showed. And the only alternative is that the artist must have planned his work to enclose and enshrine the ancient pillar without destroying it. Franceschini, who makes much of this interesting possibility, points for confirmation to the strange depth of the reredos; otherwise uncalled for, and unnatural; and refers to the books of the Laudesi themselves, where the whole is never called a tabernacle, as we name it to-day, but "the work of the pilaster"; no doubt from the central sacred object which attracted its lavish adornment. The tiny door and internal stair here would thus admit of one or other of two explanations almost equally interesting. For, either they were Orcagna's own design to allow continued access to the venerable object within; or they may possibly be, at least in part, thirteenth-century work; an adapted remnant of the stairway that once led to the roof of the original Loggia destroyed in 1304. However this may be, it is certain that Orcagna's tabernacle gave the last impulse to a movement that claimed the whole Loggia for sacred uses. It was clearly unfit—even Boccaccio felt it—that a place so dignified should still gather within its precincts the hubbub of a common market. So, in 1366, Simone Talenti, at orders of the Laudesi, began to spin his fairy webs of stone across the archways of the Loggia, and by 1380 the place was fairly enclosed as a Church.

Meanwhile the Arte di Por' Santa Maria had not been idle here; for Benci di Cione was at work for them on the upper floors in 1361; nineteen years later the Commune and Crafts filled these higher windows with columns and tracery of Carrara marble; in 1386 the wooden roof—a fine piece of carpentry—was framed and fitted by Bartolo di Dino, and the fourth year of the new century added the cornice as a crown that completed the whole. Finer and finer, from this date onwards, grew the Tabernacles of the Trades, where Donatello was presently busy for the Linaiuoli (San Marco, 1411), Beccai (San Pietro, 1413), Corazzai (San Giorgio, 1415), and Parte Guelfa (San Lodovico, 1420); while Ghiberti served the Mercanti (S. G. Battista, 1414), Cambio (San Matteo, 1419), and Lana (San Stefano, 1425). As time went on, Verrocchio (St. Thomas convinced, 1464–83, for the Mercanti); Baccio da Montelupo (S. G. Evangelista, 1515, for the Guild of Silk), and, finally, Gian Bologna (San Luca, 1600, for the Giudici and Notai) continued worthily the high tradition of the place.

This seems the moment when a last word may fitly be said regarding the architectural style of Or San Michele; a matter which we have hitherto, and rightly, postponed to the discussion of its constructive principle. One of the Tabernacles affords a good starting-point: the midmost of the three that face Via Calzaiuoli, where Donatello set his work for the Parte Guelfa in 1420. Here, in exquisite sort, the frieze and tympanum, with the columns, capitals and mouldings, tell their own tale; we are looking on one of the first, and not least exquisite, achievements of the Renaissance. Now pass within the Church, and note that here the style is not, as we should expect, the Gothic, even of Florence, but a later Romanesque that affirms itself beyond doubt or question. Double round-headed arches close the windows above; the inner and higher slightly stilted so as to rise sicklewise over the others. From the height thus gained a slight doming easily brings the vaults to meet the crown of the nearly semicircular diagonals; a device, this, which was early discovered and constantly repeated ere the pointed arch had come to do the same work more gracefully and with greater power. Note also how, in



Donatello's Shrine from E. wall of Or San Michele.

the capitals, the upper edge of each *abacus* is bevelled back to meet the arch-lines at their springing; you will find the original of this device in the crypt of San Miniato, where it is used frankly to mask the stilting that early builders knew not how better to dissimulate. And the Gothic proper to the age, where is that to be found at Or San Michele, unless in mere decoration; among the foliage of the capitals, or the traceries that fill the windows; in Orcagna's Tabernacle, or the niches under the external cornice? One constructive arch, and one only, shows just a hint of the pointed form; it is that which, on the first floor, springs from the middle of the west wall to meet the nearest free pillar. To this then Gothic has been reduced at Or San Michele, a mere by-play; and so this building has, in the matter of style, its supreme value as asserting the peculiarly Italian continuity which carried Romanesque forms and methods down to the very cradle of the new Renaissance.

But it is more than time we left architecture for *Art*, as the Florentines understood the word; that organised life of industry and commerce which honoured itself so finely in every tabernacle of this Church, and, we may add, in every stone of the whole building. We choose that *Art* which made itself chiefly responsible here, and come now to study the stages by which the Guild of Silk rose to the height of its great position in Florence.

We hear of the Arte della Seta as early as 1193; in 1225 it had already a long matriculation list, containing some of the best-known names in Florence. But though its existence, and, in a measure, its success are thus declared during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the fifteenth was the age when it openly triumphed. Villani, so careful to record the flourishing state of the Arte della Lana in 1308 and 1338, does not even mention that of silk, though, as we have seen, it had already been preferred to the charge of the works at Or San Michele, the Trades' Church. On the other hand Dei, the chronicler of 1472, tells us the Seta had then eighty-three *botteghe* of importance; trading as exporters with "Rome, Naples, Catalonia, Spain, Seville, Turkey, Barbary, Avignon, London, Lyons, Monealieri, Genoa, Antwerp and

Italy." Thus this industry excelled its very teachers, and came at last to supply both east and west together.

Several reasons may be alleged to account for so extraordinary a development. Early in the fifteenth century—Ammirato says in 1422—the goldsmiths of Florence, affiliated to the Art of Silk, learned how to draw thread from the precious metal. This they furnished of such surpassing quality that, almost at once, the Florentine brocades, where it shone mixed with silver and colour, came to hold the first rank in the market. About the same time the culture of the mulberry was encouraged in the *Contado* of Florence, and the export of raw silk hindered (in 1443), with evident advantage to the home industry, which thus obtained its prime material in greater quantity and at lower cost.

Such matters, however, are subsidiary, and we must rather seek the real cause of this advance in the falling fortunes of the Guild of Wool, hard hit by the closure of the northern market and the Turkish occupation of Constantinople. Calimala, or the Guild of Merchants as it was now called, cast about for new cargoes that might replace those it used to carry for the Lana to France, Flanders, and England. To find them it increased its dealings in manufactured silk, to which the northern trade was still open. This demand then it was above all which produced the supply; and encouraged the Arte della Seta to work as never before; raising the raw material at home in growing quantity; eagerly adopting and perfecting new processes of manufacture, and fairly conquering the market by the sheer excellence of its finished products. Yet here in its full development, not less plainly and surely than in its origin, this Arte owed the impulse that made it great to the premier Art of Florence, the Calimala; which, even in its later character as a carrying rather than a manufacturing company, ruled while it served the industrial life of the city.

Of primary importance here must be reckoned the process of silk manufacture which gave such remarkable results. The raw material, brought to Florence from abroad or from the other Italian provinces, reached the city not as cocoons, but in the form of thrown silk put up in hanks. The best kinds were the Spanish,

with which were reckoned the silks of Ascio, Almeria, and those called Ciattiche; all lustrous, strong, and of a fine yellow colour; also those from the neighbouring Modigliana, Lucca, Pescia, and Pistoia; their equals, to say the least, in beauty and quality, and, like them, fit for use in all kinds of work. The Spanish came in packets of five or six pounds, wrapped in plaited reeds and labelled in Moorish characters, for the Infidel still ruled in Granada. Other silks of less account and price—the Spanish and its equivalents fetched 2.10–2.13 per pound—were such as the dead-white from the Marche (1.10), the heavy Sicilian from Messina (1.10), and, worst of all, the Catanzana from the Archipelago (0.11); its thin, poor threads smeared and stuck together with gum mastic. The list might be largely extended, for Calimala evidently laid the whole Mediterranean under contribution to furnish raw material for the shops of the Por' Santa Maria.

As far as one can gather from the rather confused pages of the anonymous *Trattato dell' Arte della Seta*,[1] the silk, when it reached the workshop, was handled somewhat after the following manner: After being roughly sorted (*iscierre di filo*, ch. VI) it went to be wound (*incannare*, ch. I) and spun; was then steeped (*istufare*, ch. IV), again wound, sorted still more closely (*iscierre di sodo*, ch. VII), made into thread or twist (*torcere e filare*, ch. VIII), boiled (*cuocere*, ch. V), mended and arranged (*preparare*, ch. IX), dyed (ch. XIII–XLI), and delicately sorted in all the tints that the eye could discern in its colour. Then it went back to be wound and set for the loom (*ordire*, ch. XLII–XLIV), was woven, either plain (*liscio*), or in figures (*opera*, ch. LIV–LXI), and, when it came back, was folded (*piegatura*, ch. LXIV) for the shop. All through these processes it was again and again worked on the *caviglia* (chs. II, III). White silk was sorted in a way of its own (ch. X), and bleached with burning sulphur (ch. XXXVII).

It is difficult to feel sure that one has grasped every detail of so elaborate a manufacture involving so many different processes, yet

[1] Published from various MSS. by Gargiolli, Firenze, 1868. It is supposed by its editor to date from about the year 1400, but there are evident additions (see pp. 115 *et seq.*) which would bring it down to 1450 or later.

the main secret of the whole can hardly be missed. The Florentine silk, like the wool, owed its quality and fame as a finished product to the delicate and repeated selection it underwent. When he bought it in the bale the silk-master knew what each country and kind was fit to produce; warp or weft, thread or twist, light or heavy. For this end he distinguished between the hanks themselves and the coarser silk used to tie them (*bandolo*); so that no waste should occur, but every quality pass to the use for which it was fit. In a second sorting the products of the first were examined, thread by thread, and arranged anew according to their thickness. A third followed, still more important, in which account was taken of subtle distinctions of quality, and the threads rearranged according to the kind of stuff to be produced. But most remarkable of all was the colour sorting. A thousand accidents, inevitable in dyeing, made it certain that even in the same hank the threads would differ almost imperceptibly in tint, and, woven as chance had left them, would lead to irregularity of colour in the stuff. So the threads were sorted for colour, pale or full, up to twelve or even fifteen tints; and arranged so that when respun, absolute uniformity was the result. Few, one must suppose, had eyes keen enough for such work; and the *Trattato* says it could only be done upon a white cloth spread in the subdued light and air peculiar to certain lanes of Florence where the sun never shone. Thus patience had her perfect work; and the success of these silks was no happy accident, but the just reward of almost unequalled labour and skill.

We may now pass from material and manufacture to consider the workers themselves; the hands and heads that built up this great industry. The *bottega* of the silk-master furnishes a useful distinction here, for much of the work was carried on outside; by the throwers, reelers, spinners, boilers, dyers and weavers; and only the rest belonged to the *bottega* in the work of the *caviglia;* the sorting in all its various stages; the mending, preparing, putting up in hanks; and, finally, the folding and storing for sale when the silk was finished.

Of the outside workers the throwers, reelers, spinners, and

weavers carried on their trade either at home—for many of them were women—or in large *filande* or weaving shops. They were paid by the piece, and often in kind (*roba*), and were therefore independent, yet not entirely so. The silk loom was even more complicated and costly than that used for wool or linen, and must often have been the property of the master, to whom, therefore, we find that the weaver was often in debt.[1] Many of these workers lived in *Camaldoli*, a quarter of the Oltr' Arno under San Miniato, or in the Via San Gallo.

The boilers and dyers were still more independent, as they worked for the Lana as well as the Seta, and had a strong organisation of their own. Here payment in kind was the rule, and probably took the form of dyestuffs, such as *kermes* and *grana*, for we find that the silk-master's skill was partly exercised in the buying of these drugs. But the boilers furnished their own soap and were paid for it, though often in kind. These people worked in the Borgo dei Tintori and adjacent streets by the Arno.

Within the *bottega* all were the servants of the place, and worked for wages. At their head was the silk-master himself, who bought the raw material, oversaw the sorting, and had the responsibility of the whole. These masters sat as members of the Arte or Trade Council, and to their position and action as such we must now give some attention.

The policy of the Arte della Seta differed little in its larger lines from that with which we have already become familiar in the case of the Lana. The individual had here to sacrifice much of his independence in favour of concerted action by the Guild. As in the Lana, the prime necessity was, of course, an abundant and therefore cheap supply of raw silk and of labour. So we find the Arte encouraging the cultivation of the mulberry (1423); prohibiting the export of cocoons (1443); and inviting the residence of spinners under a promise of twenty years' exemption from tax. No less important was it that every new process, and the last refinements of manufacture, should at once be brought to Florence. In 1463 Maestro Luigi Bianco, of Venice, because of his skill in

[1] See the *Trattato*, p. 115.

making irons for the silk loom, was kept in Florence on petition of the Arte della Seta; the city promising to defend him against his Venetian creditors as long as he stayed with them. In 1476 Cosimo di Antonio Dini had a prize given him for perfecting the manufacture of gauze. The old statute of the Arte mentions that the like was done for a Paduan who carried to Florence from Bologna the process of making crape.

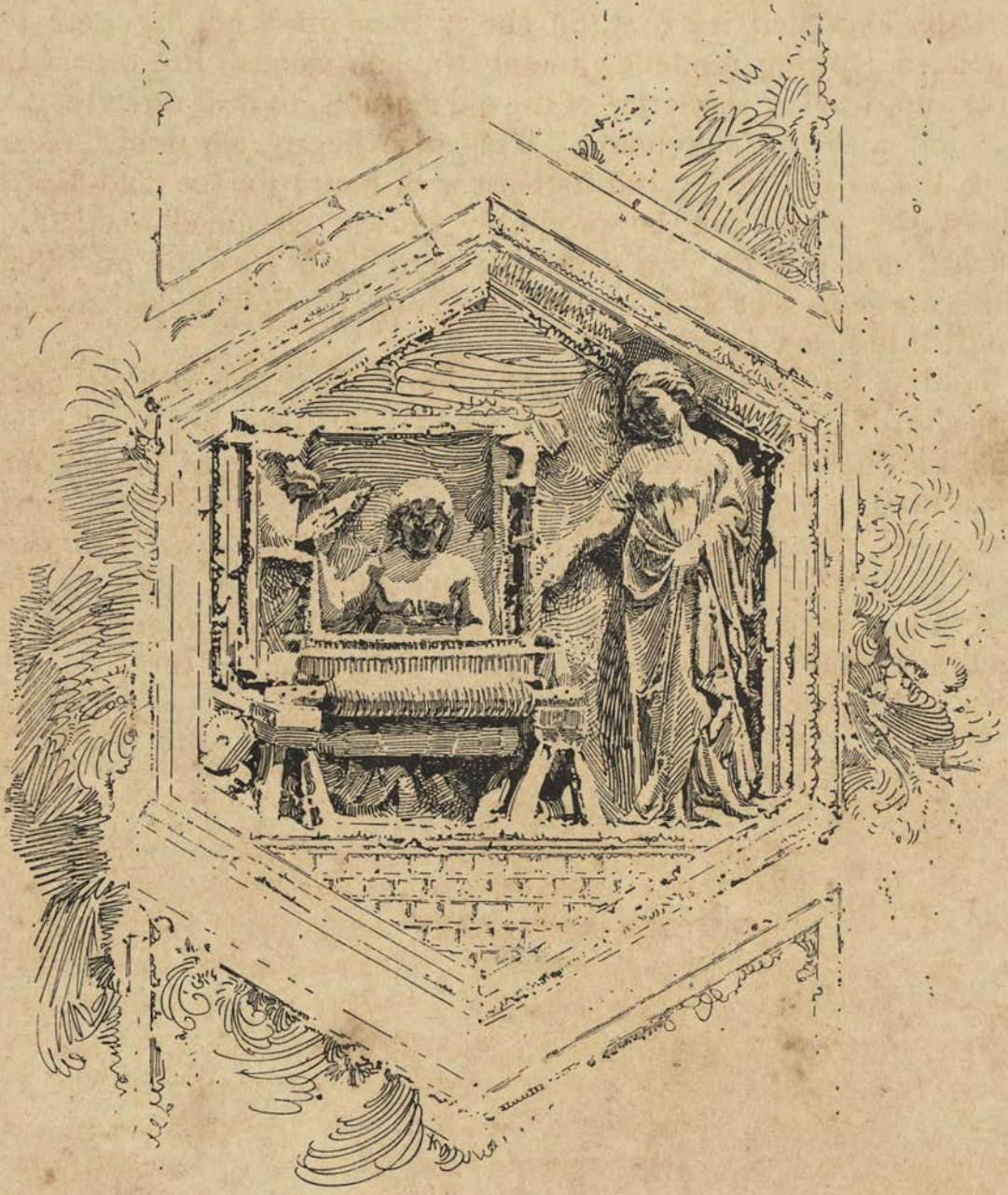
Of more doubtful service, yet not less natural to the times or the men, was the action of the Guild in controlling prices and superintending the details of manufacture. It was exacted, for example, in 1376, that no member might deal in cloth, or in goods other than silk, and that when he bought the bargain must be struck, not directly, but through a sworn broker attached to the Arte; so that every transaction was subject to an initial tax (*tara*). We read also of the *tare* on spinning and weaving; the latter expressly reserved (*ritensione*) for the Guild itself, which gained two *danari* on every *fiorino* expended by the silk-master, thus securing a considerable corporate income. The Arte discouraged all free manufacture; everything must be done *secundum Artem*—a phrase of the most precise meaning in these days—down to the breadth prescribed for each fabric; from the humble *brusti* of half a *braccio*, to the lordly *taffetas*, *baldacchini*, and *saie*, which might spread to a *braccio* and seven-eighths.

If such minute management and careful restriction were felt irksome—and we know they came to be so felt—yet there was much on the other side; much in this supervision which made for the advantage of the Guild members. Wages were fixed; the spinners, for instance, receiving eight *soldi* per pound of silk by an order dated 6th December, 1429; and protection was given from foreign competition, as of the Lucchese settlers in Florence whom the Statute of the Guild recognised, permitting them in their own organisation to elect officials if these were approved by the Guild, but taking precautions against fraud, and enacting that none might sell by retail till he had qualified as a full member of the Arte.

One can see how this accurate mastery of silk must have led to results even more uniform than our modern way attains by the aid

of all its improved machinery. A curious effect of this uniformity in the finished products was that, in Florence at least, their values were so accurately ascertained that silk fabrics passed current as money. In this kind (*i drappi per la via del baratto*) the dyer's account was often settled by the silk-master; just as, in another department of the Guild—that of the Goldsmiths—and in the opposite sense, real money, the inimitable *fiorino* of the city, was beaten into gold leaf for the painters, or drawn into thread for the silk weavers; thus becoming the material of Art and, as it were, entering commerce by another door. And indeed it is not hard to believe that the weaving of gold and silver in tissues must not only have raised their price but steadied it; establishing a relation between all the fabrics of such looms and actual currency in specie; so that, without difficulty, either might be booked in terms of the other, or used as an alternative means of payment. Every finished yard of Florence silk was, in fact, so much money coined for the commonwealth. These were the great days of the Art when, year by year, the recurring 24th of June, with its Festa of San Giovanni, saw every shop in the Por' Santa Maria draped with the precious products of the loom from the first-floor windows to the street: a unique display which led the eye onwards to that other, yet allied, branch of Art which still shines in the shops of the Goldsmiths' bridge. The skilful hand which the Art lent to painting—the hand of him who was, and is, the Ghirlandaio—has taught us to see it all in the chancel frescoes of Santa Maria Novella, where his Ginevra dei Benci still stands, moves and shines in the fluent gold of her brocades, and where Politian's bold inscription still chants the praise of Florence as she seemed in these days: "An. MCCCCLXXXX quo pulcherrima Civitas, opibus, victoriis, Artibus, aedificiisque nobilis, copia, salubritate, pace perfruebatur."

And it is well, for else what had we to tell us of that which this city and this Art once were? The industry of silk, in taking the place once held by that of wool, seems to have accepted the fate of what it supplanted; a fate in its case much later and more gradual yet not less sure. Something perhaps had been learned ere the Arte della Seta rose to its full power; there was a feeling in



Giotto's "Nastra Petrusvilla"

CHAPTER IV

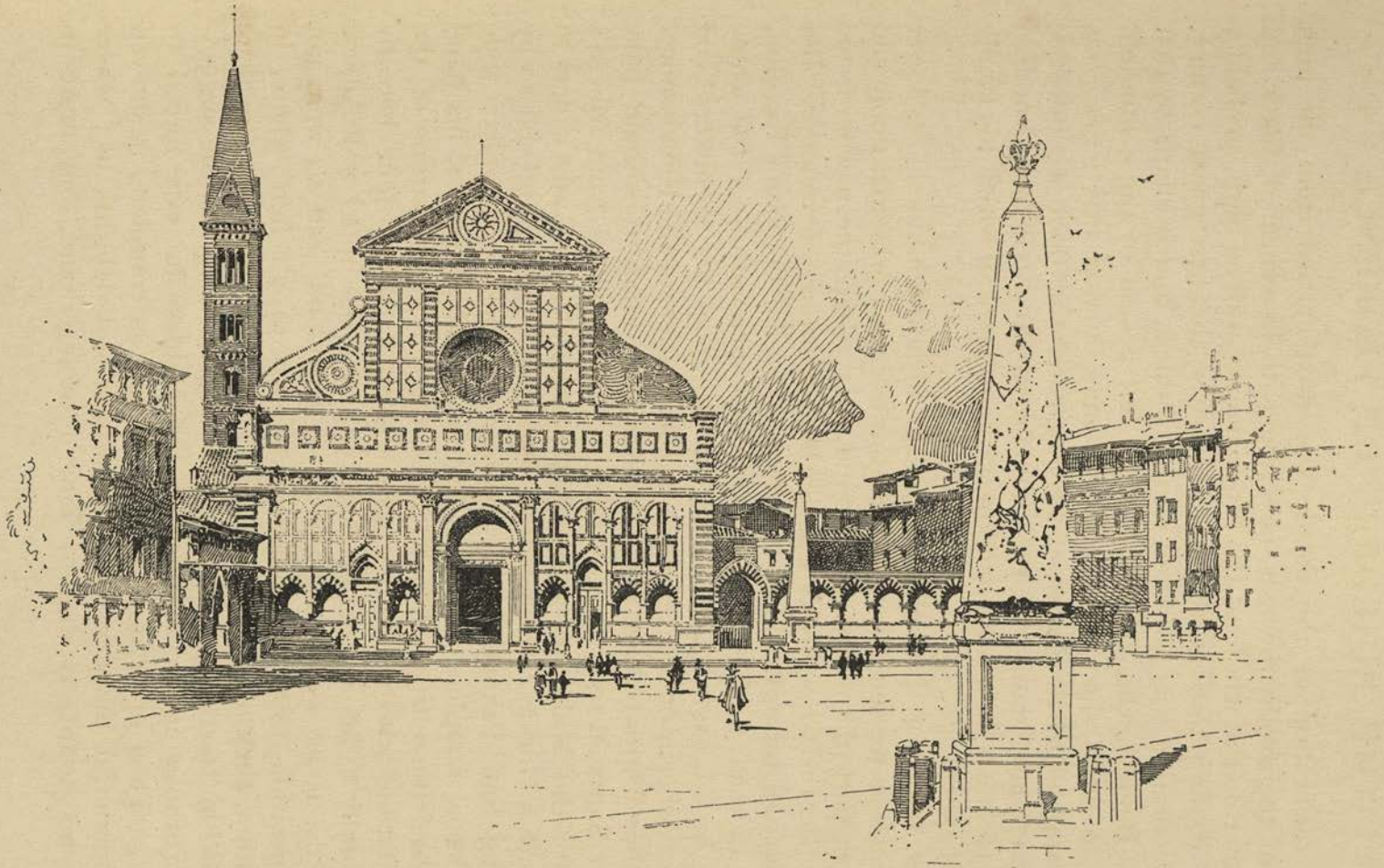
THE FACADE OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA AND THE RUCELLAI

ALL that is known of this remarkable monument, as regards the making of it, shall here be told as briefly as possible. In 1279 the Cardinal Latino laid the foundation stone of new works at Santa Maria Novella. Hitherto that Church had consisted of the smaller building which forms the present transepts. This it was now proposed to enlarge by pushing out the present chancel on the north and adding the nave on the south, so that the new Church should be cruciform. About the year 1300 the work was complete, comprising of course the great wall of the new south façade—our special subject here. The lower part of this wall—which is noticeably thicker than the rest—was paid for by a legacy of two hundred florins left to the Convent by Donna Guardina Guardi, wife of Cardinale Tornaquinci, whose will was proved on the 10th February, 1303. The upper part of the wall was paid for by the Ricci family.

The former façade—now the end wall of the east transept—had borne tombs overlooking a small burying-ground. This arrangement was in part repeated on the new façade, where the massive masonry of the lower wall seems indeed expressly planned for such a purpose. The burial arches, or *avelli* as they are technically called, were continued on a return southward to the Convent gate; the last, that of the Mannelli family, being contracted for in 1314. The Tornaquinci—perhaps in regard of Donna Guardina's liberality—had assigned to them one on the façade itself—that between the eastern and the principal door. This work, both structural and decorative, belongs then to the first fourteen years of the century.

The decoration of the façade was next carried from the arch heads of the avelli upwards, covering with its veneer of black and white marble the whole of the lower deeper wall as high, probably, as the roofing line at the *set back* over the first great cornice. This decoration was paid for by the Baldesi, and perhaps by that Torino Baldesi who, dying in 1348, left a sum of three hundred florins to finish the great door. It may be that this legacy was never applied to its purpose; at any rate, the door we now see is of much later date. In 1365 Tedaldino Ricci left three hundred florins to finish the round window in the upper wall which his family had put there.

Thus, then, for a hundred years the façade remained—its lower half much as we see it now, excepting only the principal door, and its upper part plain and undecorated, save where the marble frame of the Ricci window broke a little that monotony of masonry. But the new age brought other benefactors here. Giovanni Rucellai, a rich merchant, planned to restore the decoration of the whole façade in the taste of the time, choosing as his architect Leon Battista Alberti, one of the most famous fathers of the Renaissance. Had the original plan been carried out, what we should have seen at Santa Maria Novella can be fairly guessed from Alberti's work for the Malatesta at Rimini, where, also, he was called to deal with a Gothic church of the thirteenth century, and did so by encasing San Francesco, façade and all, in the complete style of a classic temple. At Santa Maria Novella, however, his hand was not left so free. The Baldesi interfered as patrons of the lower façade who would not suffer the decoration done here by their family to be covered or removed. On the upper wall Alberti might do as he would, for the Ricci had sunk, and so were not in a position to make difficulties; least of all here where, in decoration, they had done so little. Yet the architect's fine taste obliged him to conform his whole decorative design to the suggestion of those earlier marbles of the Baldesi he was forced to respect. Thus in 1470, when the whole was complete, it showed that wonderful unity in diversity which still delights us; where much, no doubt, is due to Time's toning hand, but more to



Façade of S.ta M.a Novella

Alberti's admirable skill and self-restraint. To complete this preliminary survey of the façade it is only necessary to add that the principal door was placed here by Bernardo Rucellai, Giovanni's son, for whom Giovanni Bertini worked and set its marbles; and that the reversed volutes connecting the upper and lower façade, one on each side, were added in the eighteenth century, that on the left having been built, plastered and painted—for it is only an imitation of marble—in 1778. So at least Mancini tells us.

From these later and comparatively unimportant details we return to our main theme in the substantial façade, and especially its decoration in black and white during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The conditions under which Alberti worked here have made the whole a remarkable unity, and it must now be our business to see something of the general order of things to which that whole belongs. Only thus can we hope to understand as well as admire the particular features presented by this important monument of Florentine architecture.

At the height of their splendid history the Romans had learned to use a double system of decoration, external and internal. Outside their important buildings stood the traditional Orders—Doric, Ionic or Corinthian—fully structural in the peristyle of the Temples; shrunk to a mere applied imitation on the Triumphal Arch or the Theatre, but always finely decorative; their higher or lower relief emphasising its forms on a ground of subtly changing shadow that themselves afforded. Within, the necessary absence of such effects of light and shade was compensated for by the free use of colour, given here by rare marbles cut in thin slabs and applied to the walls by the aid of irons set in the wonderful Roman *cæmentum*, itself largely composed of marble dust.

When the Empire of the West declined to its fall, the rising Church chose two building types from all that wealth of Classic Architecture as best fitted to house and express the new Faith. Her Basilicas preserved the form as well as the name of the Roman Courts of Justice; her Baptisteries held at least a strong reminiscence of the circular Temple and the Tomb. The Basilica and the Baptistery, thus derived, have extraordinary importance in

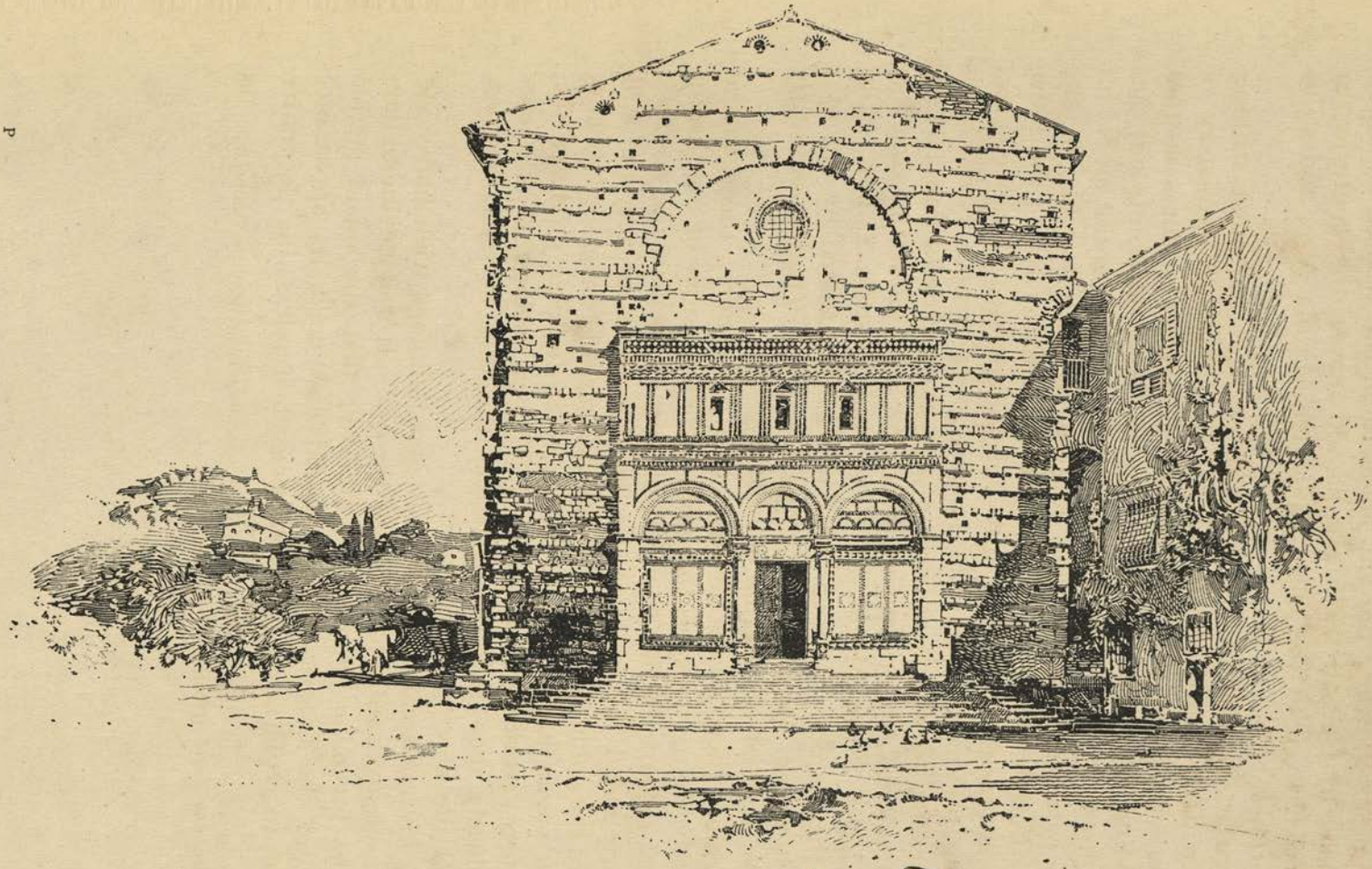
the history of Architecture, for, in Ecclesiastical building at least, the continuous life they present made them the vehicle by which the remains of Classic *technique* passed across the centuries of shock and change to the early and later Middle Age, and so to modern times.

A singular instance of this survival, perhaps the most striking that even Italy can show, may be seen in the Baptistery of Florence. Its latest and most careful illustrator[1] assures us that this building belongs to the fifth century A.D., and points out that the arrangement of its external marbles has furnished the model for a whole series of neighbouring façades in the Churches of the Badia of Fiesole (before A.D. 1000); San Miniato (1013); the Pieve of Empoli (1093); San Salvatore del Vescovado, Florence (1225, according to Vasari), and San Jacopo sopra Arno. Now this is the succession to which, at least in part, the façade of Santa Maria Novella belongs, together with the richer marbles of the same age which clothe Santa Maria del Fiore and Giotto's Tower. Our subject then is one which can only be rightly reached by way of a study—however brief and superficial—of the Classic and early Christian systems of external decoration.

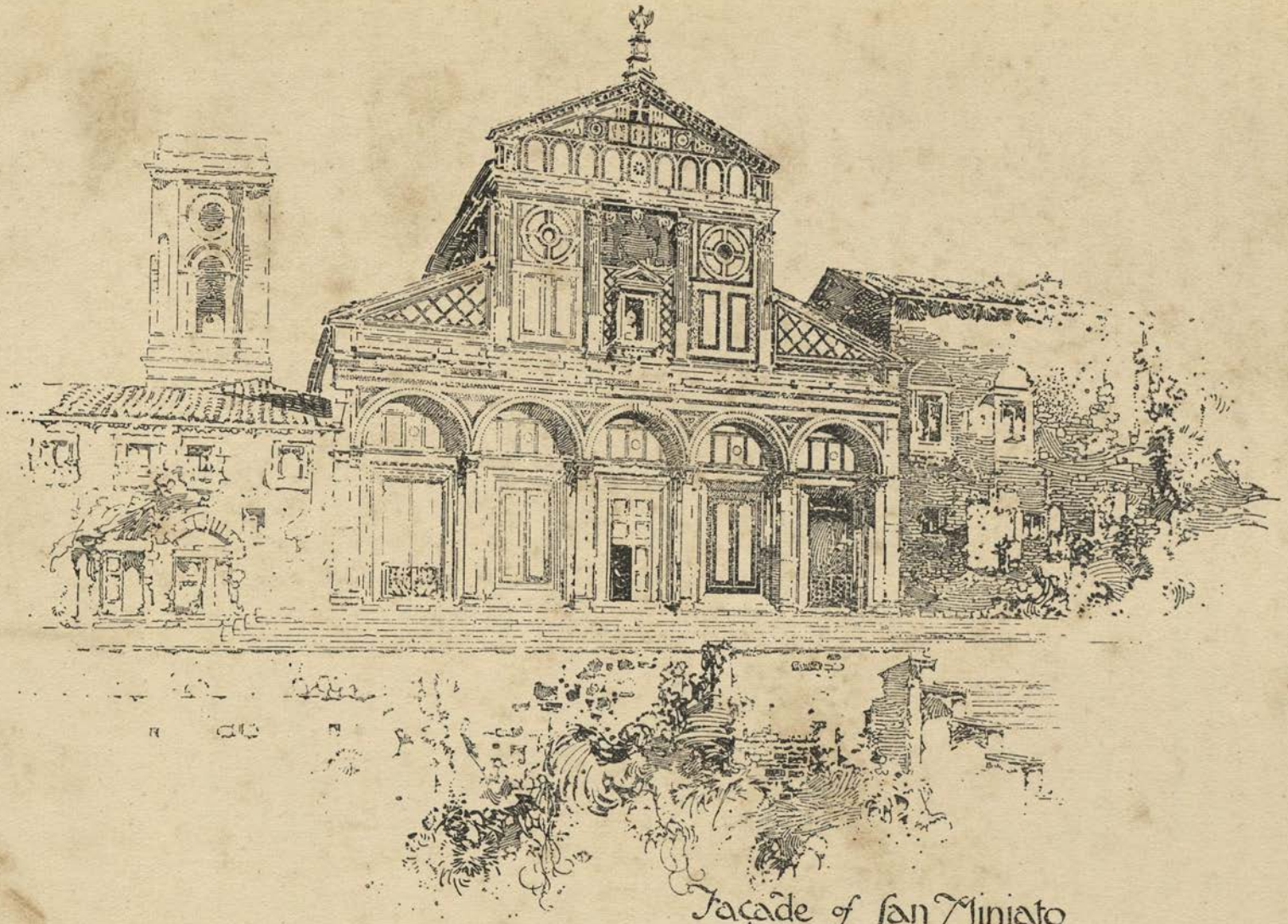
Returning then to the Basilica and Baptistery, the essential point to be first grasped is that both were inversions of antecedent Classical types. In the Temples, oblong or circular, the *peristyle* had surrounded the wall; in the Basilica and Baptistery the wall encloses the columns. The Basilica had already developed its new form in pagan hands, and, later, Christian builders produced the Baptistery; working from the Basilica by an analogy which shows how closely they followed Classical tradition in their progress towards the new architecture.

This inversion carried within the new buildings what had stood for the sole outward adornment of the old. It was inevitable then that the inversion should be complete; that the inlaid marble casing of the Classic interior should now make its appearance outside, to replace, on walls otherwise featureless, the decorative

[1] A. Nardini Despotti Mospignotti, whose general conclusion is accepted by Venturi in his still more recent *Storia dell' Arte*, Vol. III.



Badia Fiesolana.



Façade of San Miniato

effect of the missing colonnades. It did so appear, but, ere we can understand a mural decoration such as that of San Giovanni, not to speak yet of Santa Maria Novella, we must make certain deductions from the simplicity with which it has seemed well to present, at first, the substantial nature of so important a change.

As a matter of fact, the internal marble decoration of Roman times, so far from being banished from the Church interiors, was eagerly retained as adding the charm of colour to the new combination of column and arch now truly and functionally related to each other. Correspondingly, then, the exterior of these Churches and Baptisteries kept still some suggestion of the classic *peristyle* in the pilasters that broke their wall surfaces at regular intervals, and in the cornices that divided them by vertical spaces. Arches joined pilaster to pilaster above, for so the new architecture decreed; the projection of the system beyond the wall face was very slight as yet, giving but little promise of the strange, almost extravagant, development it was to reach one day in the Romanesque façades of Pisa and Lucca; but the real nature of this device is unmistakable; it is the classic peristyle, repressed and altered indeed, but persistent still. Not to dead walls, then, but to masonry already so disposed, and enriched with at least the suggestion of classic form, was the new application of marble made.

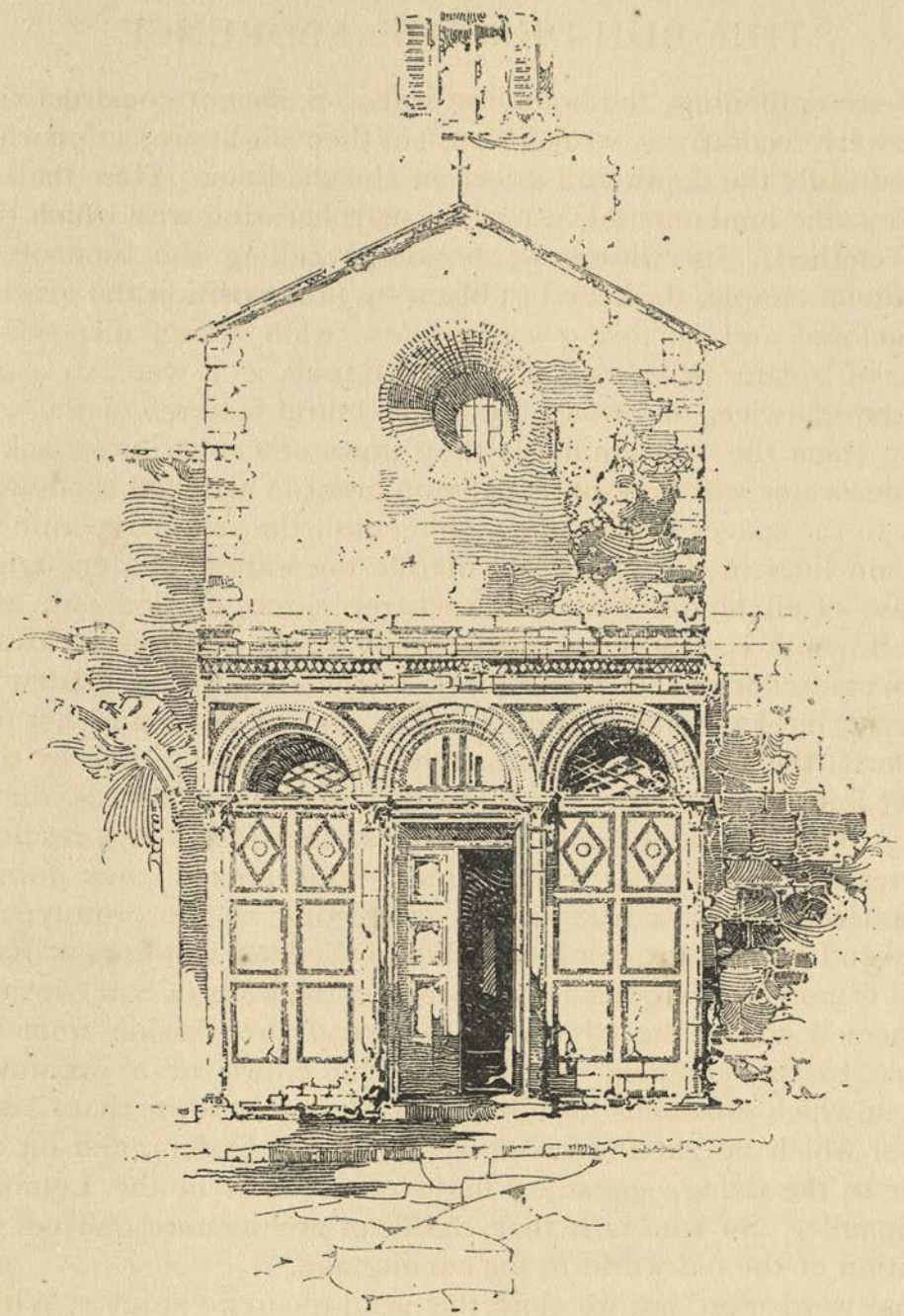
And the marble itself, of what kind was it? The Empire of the West was in its decline; no longer able to command the quarries of the world with all their precious spoil. Hardly yet were the days when the great palaces of the past lay open to any hand that cared to rob them of their stones of price. Such fragments of colour as could be had, the surviving classic tradition reserved for the internal decoration of the Churches; for their exterior, local marbles, white and black or darkest green, such as Italy could furnish, were alone available. Here the decorative system was, perforce, restricted to a harmony in black and white, which might yet, observe, be a true reëvocation of the light and shade that gave their grace to the classic colonnade.

The *peristyle* transferred within, was now represented externally by the new system of pilasters, arches and cornices, which relieved,

while strengthening, the bounding walls. Sufficient constructively, these were decoratively weak because of their slight projection which limited sadly the depth and sweep of the shadows. Here then lay the first, the fundamental, use of the marble casing with which they were clothed. Its whiteness, besides recalling the tone of the traditional temple, darkened to black by juxtaposition the green of its enclosed and enclosing serpentines; while these, disposed in bands of greater or lesser breadth, were used, as it were, to *underline*, once, twice, or thrice, the architectural features of the wall, giving them the just emphasis they must otherwise have lacked. The decorator was here principally an artist in artificial shadow.

As to the spaces left by this architecture, the simple repetition of its main lines in the superficial marble decoration was enough to dispose of all monotony. For such repetition, carried out, as it must be, both vertically and horizontally, broke up these enclosures into rectangular panels with a black surrounding, derived from the adjacent lines of pilaster and pilaster, or of base and cornice. Similarly, the arches were not merely repeated in full size by their nearer lines of emphasis, but threw their forms downwards, diminishing them to the span of the panels, themselves the result of progressive rectangular contraction. The arcade thus formed decoratively under a true arch is interesting as the prototype of many and many a grouping of lights in the later windows of Italy, but it is more, for, viewed as it appears on the walls of San Giovanni —where it shows the climax of a vertical progression from the simple to the complex—it presents the crown of a decorative system which proclaims its affinity, on the one hand, to that Classic school which taught the superposition of the Orders, and on the other to the rising, spreading flight of windows in the Lombard Campanile. So true is it that Basilican architecture delivers the tradition of the old world to the coming age.

One word more ere we close this semi-theoretic study. Within the panels, and so secured by their solid lines of artificial shade, this decoration will, if anywhere, feel free to be simply itself; as a servant might be when off duty and shut in his private room. It is in fact in these enclosed spaces—of a border between panel and



San Salvatore
dell'Arcivescovado

panel, or, better still, in a panel centre, as at the Badia di Fiesole or San Miniato—that we find the inlay of black on white grow fine, begin to imitate natural forms, and even at last to admit those chips and fragments of colour which lead up to the splendours of true mosaic. Thus that decorative system which began in the supply of emphasis, and continued in the repetition of structural lines, closed, as it ought, in the free field of ornament it had so fairly gained.

Returning then, once more, to our proper subject in the façade of Santa Maria Novella, we find an initial difficulty which must be disposed of ere we can apply what we have learned to this particular case of superficial decoration. For all is not surface here by any means. To say nothing, meanwhile, of the edges, where the lower façade shows plainly its full depth of wall, there are the arches of the *avelli*, shadowed caves carved as it were out of its substance, and the doors which fairly pierce it from face to face; what is to be done with them? The doors provide their own decoration in moulded ingoings, lintels, and arch-heads of Florentine fourteenth-century Gothic; the side doors, that is. The *avelli*, on the other hand, built in plain but graceful lines, need no emphasis indeed, save that of their own shadow, but must be decorated, and in such sort as to harmonise with the whole wall-face, of which the outer surface of their *voussoirs* forms part. To these then is applied another decorative system in black and white marble of which something must now be said.

Even where the Romans did not choose to case their walls in applied marbles—and sometimes even where they did—the classic architects knew and used another harmony, that of the *opus mixtum*. This appeared from the first in the structure of the wall itself, where the brick facing was broken at regular intervals by horizontal courses of travertine blocks set, like the bricks, in the cement that formed the substance of the whole. This *opus mixtum* was a late classic device of the fourth century A.D.; it passed easily and directly to the early mediæval builders, who, when they took to the use of the abundant local marbles, often alternated their courses so as to gain the horizontal effect of black on white noticeable in the Baptistery of Volterra or the Campanile of Santa

Caterina at Asti; to mention only early examples. As time went on, the same system came to be applied to arches, and even, at last, to the flat arch of composite lintels; wherever, in short, the juxtaposition of comparatively small stones made it possible to arrange that these should be laid black and white alternately. Unlike the other, this decoration was not applied as a casing but, being truly structural, arose with the building itself. Hence a wide divergence of use. The strictly alternate and structural dichromy of black and white can never be employed to emphasise architectural features, for either its lines contradict theirs if these be vertical, or, if horizontal, they inevitably lose their value if thus, as it were, repeated in each alternate course from the top to the bottom of the building. Yet emphasis there is in this as in every other use of pure black and white stones set in immediate juxtaposition. Only here its stress, which cannot be used to underline architectural ornament, falls inevitably on structure; calling attention to that building craft from which ultimately all architecture is derived, and on which from first to last it must depend.

The effect of constructive dichromy, then, is of such a kind that its place and use can hardly be doubtful. It has no power to emphasise architecture, and therefore should be kept for the decoration of what is already and by itself sufficiently emphatic. Nay more, its lines have often a positive quality of contradiction in them; and the architecture where they are permitted must not only be sufficient without added emphasis, but strong enough to assert itself still even against, or at least above, the mere building craft displayed with such emphatic prominence. But this is just the case of the *avelli* at Santa Maria Novella. They are far and away the strongest feature of the lower façade; there is no fear for them, however much attention be called to the *voussoirs* that compose their arches or to the surrounding masonry; the form of the *avello* itself is what makes the deepest impression; the shadow sleeping in its depth takes care of that. So to the *avelli*, first and most justly, was this constructive decoration brought.

The surface of the lower façade over these tombs called for different treatment, and here we find the wall-face covered with

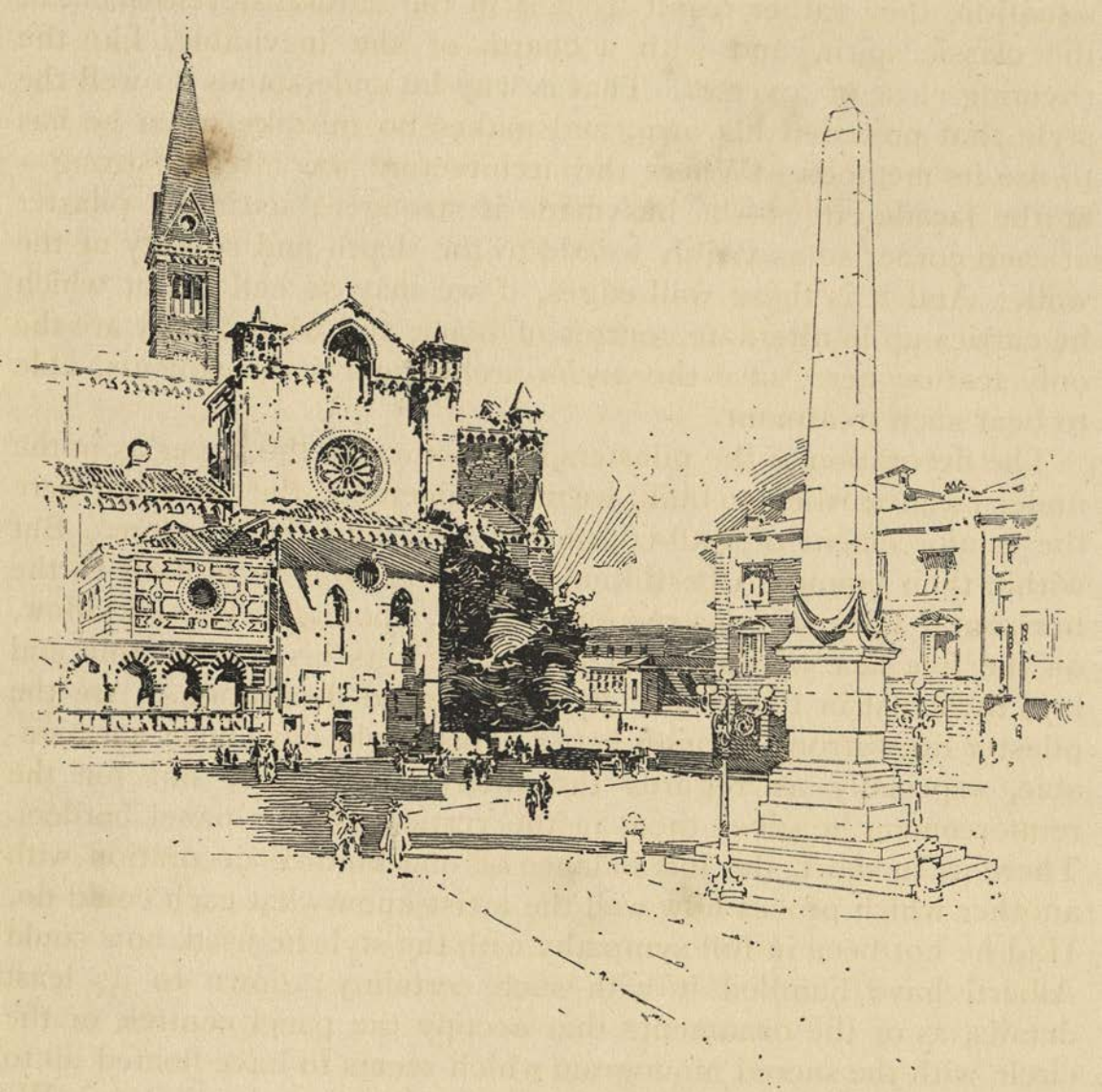
a marble veil in the more ancient style of such applied decoration. The spacing already done below by the doors and tombs is continued above. A slight shallow pilaster rises from the moulding that marks the spring of each *avello* arch. Still higher, under the frieze, a decorative arcade connects these pilasters, its Romanesque arches resting on their delicately carved capitals. The Baptistery has taught us the meaning of such imitative architecture, and already we know how it should be dressed. These pilasters and arches, unlike the *avelli*, cannot stand alone, their slight effect must be reinforced. And so the surface marbles arrange themselves in broad lines of architectural, not structural, emphasis; they under and overline the arches; they spread in artificial shade the thin shadows cast by the pilasters and Gothic pediments; they repeat the forms that have generated them, falling thus into four panels in each space, the upper pair so arched under the arch of construction as to compose with it a perfect and charming *bifora;* the whole is a late but pure example of applied decoration in marble on the old lines.

When we leave the fourteenth century for the fifteenth, is it another world we enter, or only the old in a new mode of development; self-conscious now, and therefore a little affected in its direct imitation of the traditional Italian style? What we feel first is that Alberti suffered no wrong when he was required to adapt his own to work that so fairly laid the ground for his embroideries. The forward thrust of the lower façade where it pushes out below the upper wall, and shows its delicate spacing enforced in decoration; what is this but the Middle Age sounding the recall of the classic colonnade? And Alberti, nothing loth, hearing, obeys. He draws out the edges of the lower façade in a forward return, places a Corinthian column in each nook thus formed, and when he has set another pair to flank the principal door and has run his splendid frieze over their heads, behold a Temple front *in antis!* His work at Rimini shows he would not have disowned what Bertini did here for Bernardo Rucellai; this main entrance with its imposing arch and deep retreat satisfies perfectly his own canons of taste in so important a particular.

The principal matter here is the substantial unity of new and old. Alberti's marbles do not need to adapt themselves to their situation, they rather result from it in the natural development of the classic spirit, and with a charm of the inevitable, like the rhyming close of a verse. That is why he understands so well the style that preceded his own, and makes no mistake when he has to use its methods. Where the architecture was already strong—at the façade edges—he has made it stronger; setting a pilaster at each corner so as visibly to add to the depth and solidity of the wall. And it is these wall-edges, if we may so call them, which he carries up in alternate courses of black and white; they are the only feature here, save the *avello* arches and compartments, able to bear such treatment.

The decoration of the pilasters is structural in the upper as in the under façade; when so built, we must remember, the outer pair were the reinforcement of wall-edges still free, like those below. But within their bounds Alberti knows better than to tie himself to the horizontal lines of construction. Here, about the Ricci window, on the free face of the upper façade, he cuts his marbles thin and lays them flat in the classic style of applied decoration. Are the pilaster lines strong enough here? This might have been questionable, especially as regards the intermediate pair, but for the reinforcement he gives them in the verticals of his panel borders. There is, in short, the just balance of one kind of decoration with another which proves how well the artist knew what each could do. Had he not been in full sympathy with the style he used, how could Alberti have handled it with such certainty; down to its least details, as of the ornaments that occupy the panel centres, or the circle with the sacred monogram which seems to have floated up to the tympanum of the pediment from the Ricci window below? We repeat, then, that this façade is, in all essentials, a living unity, and one possessing singular value. In it may be read the whole story of dichroic decoration, applied or structural, from its double origin in the classic schools of Art to the time of the great architectural revival in the fifteenth century.

Giovanni Rucellai, whose name stands high on this façade, and



S. M. Novella

from the East

Herbert Railton

his son Bernardo, named and buried at the threshold of its principal door, have other claims on our attention besides the fact of their belonging to a family which did so much for this place. In previous chapters we have studied the industrial particulars of Wool and of Silk. The life of the great Acciaiuoli has shown us what an individual could do to promote the general commercial prosperity of Florence. Ere we pass from this, the substantial foundation of the civic fortunes, let us now look for a little at a characteristic family, that of the Rucellai, notable as presenting in one of its members a fair example of such enterprise and skill as made Florence what she early was; and in others introducing us to that subtly advancing change which later shook the ground of such prosperity, and that refined corruption which surely led to the final inevitable catastrophe. Nothing could better serve to acquaint us with the real meaning, alike of the prosperous and the adverse fortunes of the place.

The founder of the Rucellai family was a certain Alemanno, whose name appears in documents of the years 1261–3 as a member of the Arte della Lana. He discovered the secret of dyeing with *orchil*, a sea lichen of the Archipelago, which, when treated with lye or ammonia, yields a fine purple colour. Alemanno kept the process in his own hands, and so gained not only wealth—for his cloths became the fashion—but the surname of *L'Oricellaro*, which in its modified form of Rucellai he passed on to his descendants. Even in the fifteenth century, when commerce was not what it had been, and the industry of wool showed a marked decline, the orchil dye had still a future as applied to silk; and the Rucellai held their heads high and used as their badge the sail which had so steadily brought their fortunes from the Levant. This is in fact the device which Alberti turned to such splendid and appropriate use as the running ornament of his great frieze at Santa Maria Novella, and repeated, though less noticeably, near the base of the great angle pilaster on each side of the façade. It has indeed more meaning than the formal heraldry of the family arms displayed with greater ostentation on the shields above.

Alemanno was fortunate, but he deserved to be so. His discovery was made in the East, and probably at Alexandria, for we find that the colour he produced bore at Florence the name of *alessandrino*. The business that took him to the Levant does credit to his commercial enterprise; he was on his way to open new markets there for the products of his looms. And the way he handled his discovery when made, so as to turn it to the lasting prosperity of his family and country, but strengthens the same impression. Had Alemanno not been what he was he had never known the good fortune that led to his great discovery. The secret of the *orchil* was important indeed, yet he knew, being what he was, how to make it still more so. Much he found in the practice of the East, but more he brought, and so may well remain with us as a singular type of those whose enterprise and business capacity were the real source of their country's prosperity.

Our purpose leads us to pass lightly over the history of this family during the fourteenth century. Its principal members continued to hold office in the Guild of Wool, and the family fortunes steadily rose. In 1369 five marriages in the connection were celebrated at one time; an occasion judged so remarkable and auspicious that Andrea, then head of the house of Rucellai, marked it by holding a *corte bandita* for eight days together in the cloister of Santa Maria Novella, which was crowded by the noblest citizens of Florence come to do him honour. Towards the end of the century great changes were imminent, and we note that the Rucellai furnished a bold though unsuccessful champion to the popular party. In 1382 Francesco Rucellai was Capitano di Parte Guelfa, but at the same time in close touch with the people chiefly discontented, many of whom must have been his own workmen. With the banner of the Parte displayed, he put himself at the head of eight hundred *Ciompi*, as these insurgents were called, and marched them in armed protest to the Piazza of Santa Maria Novella. Here, however, the rash rising took end, for the Gonfaloniere appeared on the scene with the Militia of the Commune and soon dispersed the *Ciompi*. Francesco was punished by exclusion from all public office for five years, but this does not

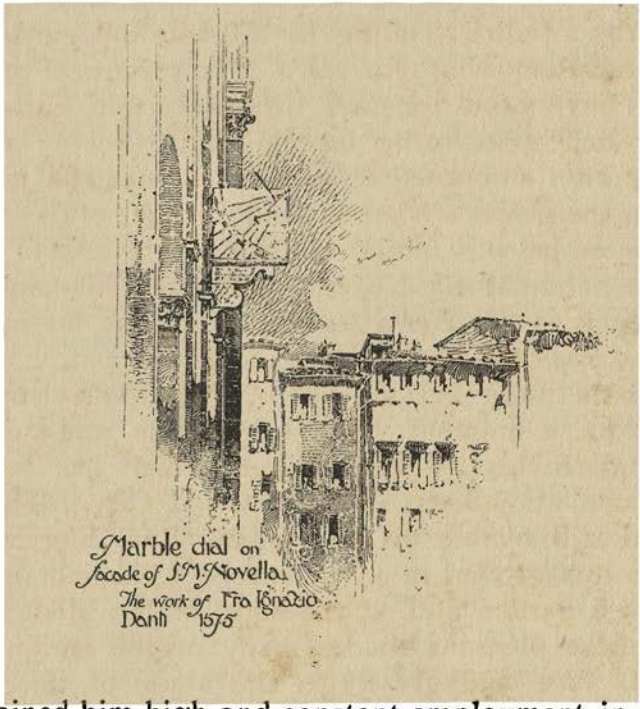
seem to have seriously prejudiced him, as we find that in 1423 he was Consul of the Arte della Lana, and had served the Signoria as Governor of many castles in the Contado.

Scattered notices like these help us to understand the family position, politics and consequence at the opening of the fifteenth century, when Giovanni Rucellai—among his kindred the chief benefactor of Santa Maria Novella—was born on the 26th December, 1403. As a youth he was put to learn business in the counting-house of Palla Strozzi the merchant, who later assumed him as a partner and gave him his daughter in marriage. A high political career soon opened for the fortunate youth, and his reputation became such that he was chosen one of the fateful Balìa of 1433. In this position he consented to the banishment of Cosimo dei Medici, and, a year later, when his principal and father-in-law Palla Strozzi was sent into exile, he also fell under the displeasure of the rising Medici and so lost all his public places. Here closes the first act in the drama of Giovanni's life.

The Rucellai were too important to be left under a cloud, and Cosimo dei Medici too astute to forget his own advantage in winning the support of a family not only rich but able, it is said, at this time to arm no less than sixty of its own members as fighting-men. It says much for Giovanni's reputation and position in the family and State that Cosimo took extraordinary steps to make sure of him; holding his son at the baptismal font, and, later, giving this son a grand-daughter of his own in marriage. Whether Giovanni's change of attitude was due to these favours or was only published and confirmed in them we cannot know; it was, at any rate, both complete and durable. Henceforth he treads the stage of Florentine affairs a convinced and confessed *pallesco;* a prominent member of the party that prepared for the downfall of their country's liberties. Gonfaloniere of Justice in 1475, and, later, one of the Magnificent's Council of Seventy, he died in 1489, leaving to his children a great fortune, the fruit of his successful dealings at Lyons and Constantinople, where he had established branches of his business. Lasting memorials of him are the Palace in Via Vigna Nuova; the model of the Holy Sepulchre in San

Pancrazio, and, as we know, the façade of Santa Maria Novella: all of which Alberti built to his orders.

The infant Rucellai for whom Cosimo dei Medici took the vows of baptism was Bernardo, born on the 11th of August, 1448. From the very font his career was thus, as it were, determined; and when he married Nannina, daughter of Piero il Gottoso, Cosimo's son, this allegiance became unquestionable. The influence of the



Medici gained him high and constant employment in offices which he did not forget to use for the advantage of his patrons. Lorenzo dei Medici had appointed him in 1490 one of a commission on Coinage and Taxation, and he so managed matters that the Magnificent gained a private profit of—it was said—fifty thousand scudi. Henceforward Bernardo's dealings were carefully watched as those of one who had given just cause of suspicion. In Savonarola's time, however, he allied himself with the Reformer so as to enjoy again a measure of the popular confidence, and it might then

have seemed that the past was forgotten. Yet his egotism and ambition were only in abeyance, and soon he gave new proof of his real quality. In 1502 he used all his influence to bring about a change in the Government whereby the Gonfaloniere should hold office for life. That he hoped for this place, already seeing Florence subject to a tyranny of the Rucellai as represented by himself, is plain from the very course of events. For, his plan failing, he left the city in disgust and began at once to intrigue for the return of the Medici, lending his Casino and garden as the rendezvous of the conspiring *palleschi*. The success of these plots in 1512 must have been touched with a certain bitterness for Bernardo, who had hoped rather to rule than to serve; and so he died two years later, mourned only as those must be whose aim in life has been their own advantage and not that of their country. By his own desire he was buried under the threshold of the door he had built at Santa Maria Novella, holding in his hand a copy of his commentaries *De Bello Italico*. For, like his master the Magnificent, he was devoted to letters and a great patron of literary men. On this the more pleasing side of Bernardo's character it is well to insist for a moment. His Latin style was superb, and shines above all in his *De Urbe Roma*, which has been called the best account we possess of the Eternal City. The famous Orti Oricellari still remain his true memorial in Florence. Bernardo bought this ground in 1482; caused a Casino to be built here; laid out a garden and, at the flight of the Medici in 1494, gathered in these pleasant shades many of the antiquities they had collected. We willingly forget the abuse of this place, as the scene of conspiracy against the Republic, remembering it rather as the chosen seat of the Platonic Academy, where Machiavelli read aloud his Commentary on the Decades of Livy and his Art of War. The sack these gardens suffered in 1530, and their sale in 1573 to the too famous Bianca Cappello, belong to the darker history of the place, and seem like a just reflection on its founder, who, for all his culture, lent himself to the cause of Medicean corruption and ended as the declared enemy of his country's liberty.

Recalling then what we know of this family history in its larger lines, and using it to interpret the decline and fall of Florentine commerce, we fix our attention on the following points none of which is without significance. When Giovanni Rucellai forsook the traditional employment of his house in the Guild of Wool to become a merchant, he followed a marked tendency of his time which boded but ill for the fortunes of the State. The merchant who distributes is indeed as necessary as the manufacturer who produces ; but, to secure lasting prosperity for both, there must be a balance kept between trade and commerce lest the merchant find no goods to carry to market. In the early days this balance of function was fairly preserved in the single premier Guild of the Calimala, which imported French cloth that it might dress the stuff and so prepare it for its own export trade. The closing of the French cloth fairs led to the establishment of the Guild of Wool in Florence, and so to a division of function ; the members of Calimala ceasing to be manufacturers and developing their activity as merchants in the distribution of what the new Art produced. The merchants then, very much because of their direct descent from Calimala with all that this implied of power, privilege and prestige, became the aristocracy of that trading community which Florence essentially was. Hence an attraction, which grew stronger as time went on, for, first it acted on the remains of the feudal nobility, leading them to prefer Calimala when obliged to become *artigiani*, and then it appealed, with the added distinction they had brought, to those in the other Arts who felt the charm of class and the promptings of ambition. Such was precisely the case of Giovanni Rucellai when he left the Guild of Wool to become a merchant, and the change he made was serious because typical of a wide movement which, coinciding as it did with the decline of the Lana, meant considerable interference with the due balance of the commercial state.

Bernardo shows us the same mischief in a further development. The keynote of his character was egotism and self-assertion. Masked in the days of the earlier Medici and of Savonarola, his real bent and purpose appeared at once on the removal of that

restraint: this in the political sphere. As for his devotion to letters, that was significant of the same innate tendency, being simply its constant lifelong expression. For literature, above all other forms of human activity, is the revelation of the individual; the refuge therefore of egotisms and ambitions which nowhere else can find so free a scope. And what then of the *Arts*, as Florence had once understood them, those strong supple associations of hands and brains where the individual was sternly repressed and success attained in manufactures and commerce alike by ordered intelligent coöperation? If the spirit of Bernardo Rucellai was typical, as we have every reason to suppose it, then both the genesis of the new spirit and its inevitable result are alike plain to see.

What we find, then, is a revolt, not altogether unnatural, against the discipline of the Guilds on the part of those, and they were a growing number, who craved a liberty of action altogether foreign to such associations. But the Guilds were the only form under which Florence knew the life of commerce and of industry. Hence the new movement conceived of its own spirit as anti-commercial, and the man who helped to swell and direct it turned his back on trade and manufactures to seek what he craved in painting, sculpture, or letters. It was the individual, at last become self-conscious almost in a modern sense, who thus demanded the means of free and ever freer expression.

Pharaoh in his dream saw seven fat kine ascend from the river, pressed hard by as many lean kine which devoured them. So Cosimo too might have dreamed, and found the interpretation at hand in his own times and city. The riches of Florentine commerce implied a certain repression, a certain starving of the individual life. And so, hard upon that great prosperity came another age which destroyed what had gone before. For Florence had no Joseph; no one wise enough to foresee the future, or to join it with the past in continuous prosperity. The life of painter and poet, subtly encouraged by the Medici for their own ends, was the crown of a revolt before which the old foundations of the State shook and passed away. The Arts swallowed up the Arti—to use

a phrase which sums up in a single word the whole history of this great transformation—and external causes, such as we have elsewhere described, did little more than contribute to a change, in its essence both intimate and personal, which marked the passage from the old world to modern times.

PART III

MONUMENTS OF THE FLORENTINE SPIRIT

CHAPTER I

SANTA FELICITA AND THE FIRST CHRISTIANS OF FLORENCE

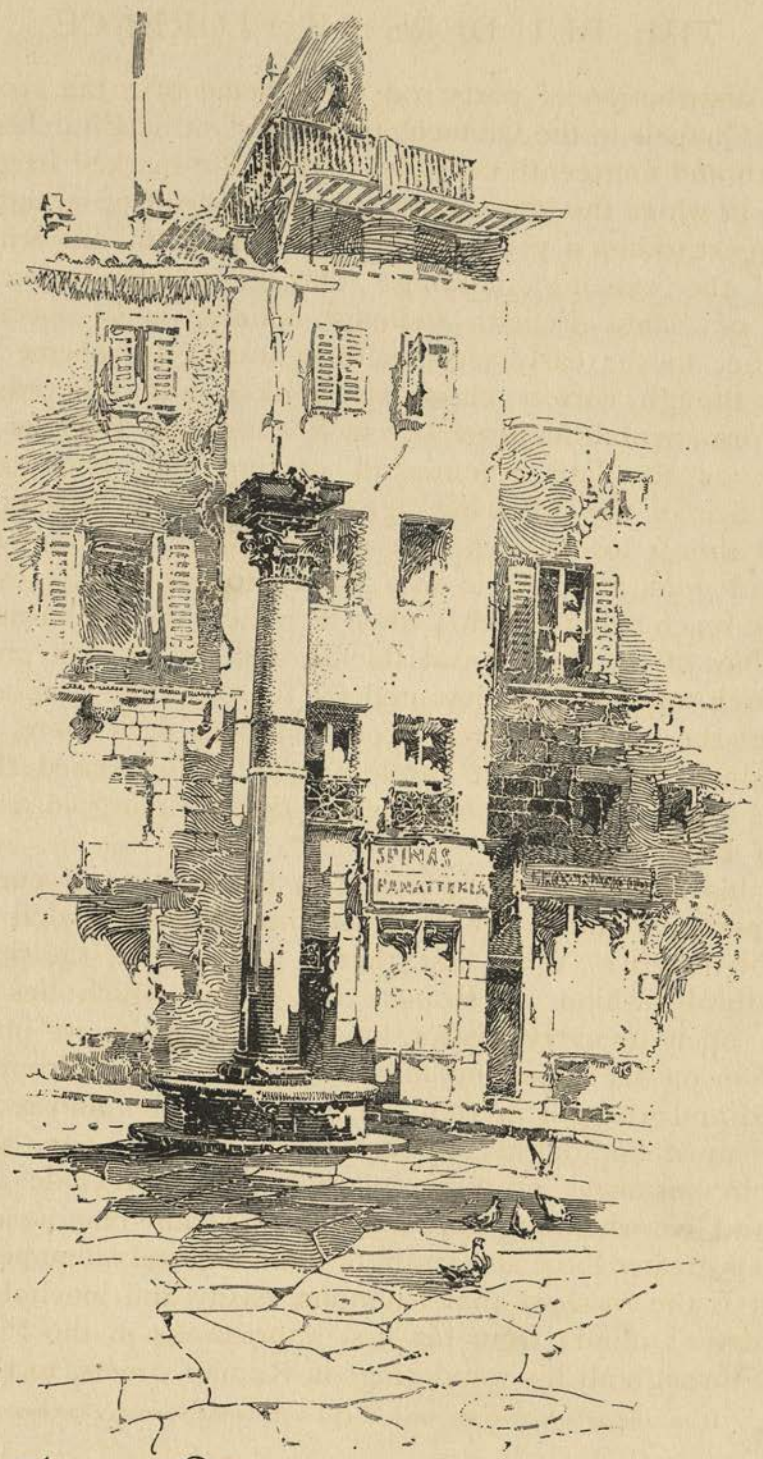
THE line of the Ponte Vecchio is continued southward by the Via Guicciardini to the Palazzo Pitti. From this street there opens to the left, midway between the bridge and the palace, a little square, as it were a peaceful eddy in the stream of confined traffic that runs and returns along the crowded thoroughfare. A column, set like a policeman on point duty, warns wheels away, and saves a quiet space across which looks the Church of Santa Felicità. The façade of this place belongs in the main to the sixteenth century, for across it passes the gallery built by Vasari to connect the Uffizi with the palace of the Grand Dukes. The arches on which this gallery stands form the Church porch, and within, at the gallery level, a Royal Tribune opens, looking directly to the High Altar from the western end of the nave. Thus the Grand Duke could hear Mass in all privacy and convenience, without once leaving the precincts of his Palace, of which this gallery formed part.

The rest of the Church, if we are to speak of features immediately and readily visible, belongs to that later age in which the whole was finally rebuilt. It dates from 1736, when the studious and expert Francesco Ruggieri was given his opportunity here, and used it largely, reducing the whole interior to its present aspect. The careful observer will notice how the ground plan and

general distribution of parts, on the scheme of a tau cross with flanking Chapels to the Chancel, recall the Gothic Churches of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; while the marked irregularity of plan, in which the nave runs to the left instead of straight, may well suggest to him a yet earlier occupation of the site which has modified the existing building. On the whole, however, the interior of Santa Felicità belongs mainly, and especially in decoration, to the early eighteenth century; its scheme that of a frigid though correct classicism, broken and relieved in the lighter ornamental features by such chastened remains of the *Baroque* as the late seventeenth century had bequeathed to the practice of the following age. The forms in question have survived almost to our own time in metal work,[1] especially that of silver and gold, and this is why the visitor who has crossed the bridge to reach Santa Felicità, when he notices the jamb ornaments, the outlines of the ornamental shields, and the bracket profiles in this church, may well be haunted by the sense of familiarity; of things of the kind but lately seen. He has seen them, and no longer since than his last careless look as he passed the shop windows on the Ponte Vecchio, which display the gold and silver wares of Florence.

And this *Baroque* then, which it is the fashion of our age to decry, perhaps unduly or at least thoughtlessly, what are we to say of it here? Why, first, that it is above all the prevailing architectural fashion of Rome; the Rome which lies on the surface, open to every visitor, and free to make its immediate impression on his sense and mind. Bernino and Borromini have not lived and wrought in vain. The classic ruins and remains of the city must be sought for each in its separate site, and seen under circumstances of difficulty that almost preclude any sustained and overwhelming impression. The same may be said, and with even greater force and truth, of the mediæval monuments. In Rome it is the *Baroque* that triumphs, easily and inevitably, over the observer's mind; from his first impressions in the Piazza del Popolo, through all his wanderings in Roman streets, to the great

[1] Hence the term *plateresque*, used of this style in the Spanish churches.



Column of Piazza S. Felicita

moment when the decorated façade of St. Peter's meets his eye beyond the spray of the fountains and the sweep of Bernino's colonnades.

Now such a fact makes strongly for defence of our choice in this chapter. We are to reach, ere we have done with Santa Felicità, the earliest days of the Faith in Florence, and it may well have seemed strange to the reader that we have chosen to do so by way of such a Church, which offers for our architectural study what he has probably been accustomed to consider as but the base building style of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There is a local and substantial reason for this choice, however, which shall appear in its due time. Meanwhile we may claim that, in the opening chapter of a book dealing with the monuments of the Florentine Spirit, it can hardly be considered unhappy that we have chosen for our study a Church which, even as it stands, is one of the few in Florence distinctly suggesting and recalling the most prominent architectural style of the Eternal City. The men who saw the building of Santa Felicità were concerned, as their ancestors of a thousand years before had been, to see that their town should still deserve the name of *piccola Roma,* and this concern they betrayed in their choice and use of what had come to be the prevailing decorative fashion in the city by the Tiber.

We are now to consider the Baroque itself, for, even if it be a style deserving nothing but contempt, yet, ere we despise, it were well to begin by understanding it. Let it first be said that the decadence in question is one which has affected not that of the Renaissance alone but every architectural style in turn. Take the Romanesque, whose solid strength would seem to have known no decay but the apotheosis, as some would call it, which lifted its massive columns and brooding vaults to the airy heights of the Gothic that succeeded it. Yet at Lucca, at Pisa, and again at Arezzo and at Rimini, there are Churches in this style whose façades are overloaded with range upon range of arcades and colonnettes. Such decoration, pushed to a wearisome arithmetic of division and multiplication, recalls, at best, the work of the Oriental carver in ivory, or, at worst, that of a clever confectioner; applied

to serious building it is surely art in decay, the Baroque of the Romanesque.

Or take Gothic itself, where the same fatal progress failed not to make itself felt. Go to Or San Michele and view Orcagna's Tabernacle, which holds much the same relation to true Gothic as the façades just cited do to the nobler Romanesque. It is true that this work bears its fripperies more bravely, as planned on a smaller scale, for the decoration of a shrine never meant to stand alone or to meet the unbroken light of day; nearer therefore in character to the ivory shut behind the glass of the collector's cabinet, as this within the jewelled screens of the great Loggia. But surely, in spite of all the beauty they adorn and express, these flutings and spirals, these crockets and cuspings, tell the tale of the Lucchese and Pisan Romanesque, announcing that the hour of decay has struck for the Gothic too as it had already done for the preceding style. Instead of talking of the Flamboyant and the Perpendicular, we might as well comprehend the peculiarities of these successive modes of Gothic decay, their ogee curves, overloaded decoration, and multiplied fan-traceries, under a single name, calling them what indeed they are, the Baroque of the Gothic.

For such successive decadences of the building art from its great styles have a common mode of self-manifestation which we begin to perceive; they agree in their abuse of curved lines. That there is a true and noble use of curvature in this art none will deny. This is seen not only in the arch and dome with all their charm, but even more subtly in the Greek Temples, where every line, almost, of base and column, of frieze and pediment, is just enough curved to seem, by virtue of perspective, absolutely straight. Such subtlety gives a life to these architectural lines which without it they could not possess, and by its grace the eye is charmed, spellbound in beholding the invisible. So to use the curve demands almost inconceivable self-restraint in the designer, lest, at the least exaggeration, that which should have been vital to the building become fatal, or rather mortal, stamping it with the clear signs of decline and decay. Now this is just the case of Pisa.

In the body of that cathedral, curvature, and indeed irregularity of every kind, is carried to a pitch which, if not yet beyond all bounds of good taste, is certainly ominous, even in the midst of the remarkable impression it helps to create and the interest it does not fail to excite. Outside, however, as we have already remarked, this warning and suggestion become an open certainty; for the architecture of the façade is clearly Romanesque that has seen its best days and fairly entered on the path of decline. And here again it is the curve that lends itself as the minister of a taste that has lost its tone; for the repetition of the arch-form in these arcades is what condemns the style even more completely than the less obvious exaggerations of the interior.

It were easy to follow the matter out through the later decay of the Gothic, and to show how the Flamboyant manner, as its very name denotes, lived in a lavish corruption of the double curve—the famous "line of beauty"—and that even the Perpendicular, amid all its rigidity, lifted high the fatal sign in its fan traceries. But, leaving this, we come to our own more immediate subject in the decay of the Renaissance architecture; that later style of building which, begun in the sixteenth century, came to full vigour in the seventeenth, and persisted in more modified form down to the opening of a romantic revival that again restored the Gothic to its place of honour. For it is the decay of the Renaissance that forms the style specifically known as the Baroque.

The important matter here is to observe that this Baroque, like every other building style, was the true and fine expression of its age, and especially of the main intellectual and religious movement of the time. As the Romanesque must be chiefly associated with the Benedictine Order, and with the ideal of Religion such monasticism represented; as, in Italy at any rate, the Gothic mainly developed the ideas of the Cistercians and the Preaching Orders, so, in its turn, the Baroque dates from the appearance of Loyola, and is especially associated with the progress of the Order he founded; its typical example to be seen in the Church of the Gesù at Rome. The revived classicism of the Renaissance is, on such a view of architectural history, but a kind of artificial interlude;

expressive too in its own way, but expressive only of the wave of paganism which, in the fifteenth century, threatened to carry men off their feet and leave them prostrate before the shrines of an affected heathenism. But Savonarola, that stern prophet of Righteousness, heads a reaction, and on his time and voice follows hard the great Reform of Luther, which not only cost Rome many a province of the North lost to her spiritual sway, but had its own effect even in Italy. Rome itself gained by her great reverse; recovered from the poisoned dream of her Borgian age; and the Jesuits, with their boundless devotion to the Apostolic See, and their new ideals of faith and duty, were themselves the highest expression of this Latin revival. Yet, withal, the last of the Middle Ages, the fifteenth century, had left its indelible mark on succeeding time, and even Jesuit Christianity was a creed which *Humanism* had profoundly modified.

Take first the more favourable side of this syncresy. From the fifteenth century the Jesuits, as devoted and skilful instructors of youth, had inherited a profound respect for classical studies. But the texts they prepared for their schools were freely treated, not merely expurgated—see their well-known edition of Martial—but modified in a Christian sense. This handling of the ancients might seem innocent, laudable even, were it not for two serious consequences which inevitably followed. The moral difference between Paganism and Christianity tended thus in Jesuit hands to disappear, and a habit of interference with standards was formed which ultimately came to be of fatal consequence. Paganism, in purged and, so far, falsified texts had been lifted towards Christianity; it only remained that Christianity in its turn should be lowered, in a toleration of pagan and worldly ideals, and the syncresy would be complete.

Hence the value we must here assign to the peculiarly Jesuit doctrine of Probability, before which all moral difficulties disappear, and the sternest and most definite imperatives of the Divine Law and of the Conscience it awakens yield in an easy tolerance of what they had most surely seemed to condemn. Such was the Religion *à la mode* of the seventeenth century, which Pascal so

scathingly exposed ; a rule so gentle and reasonable that the whole world would follow it did men only know its wise indulgence of all their favourite frailties !

In the same spirit, then, those who built for the new Order and followed the taste of the time modified the Renaissance architecture till it became the Baroque. Their works show a freedom in handling the accepted canons of form and proportion which promised new life, but ended in an openly confessed impatience of all control. Intolerance of simplicity, of directness, and of completeness, with a growing desire to surprise us by the unexpected in art, and overwhelm us by the magnificent in material, are the chief note of the new style. Architraves, pediments, and arches are purposely broken where we should least expect it, in a wanton dislocation which preserves all the members of classic architecture only that we may feel the more strongly how their true and traditional relation has been interfered with. The intervals, thus created, are filled with impertinent decoration in erratic lines that contrast unpleasingly with those of the architecture, broken to admit their presence. The climax is reached when whole masses of such mistaken building, as in a gallery front or even an entire façade, are bent to follow the sweep of a single or double curve. It is as if a wind, the breath of the new age, had entered ; subduing the lines of the classic order to its own wayward will.

So once more the curve in its exaggerated use appears as the inevitable sign of architectural decay. As a feature—the feature—of the Baroque, the best we can say of it is that it was in high and even subtle accord with the chief mental and spiritual movements of the time. In the fifteenth century the pagan revival had awakened a new interest in forbidden arts, when the Cabala was studied again, and Magic in all its forms eagerly inquired after. Something of this survived the great religious reaction of the sixteenth century. Thus, in the following age, that weaker element in Humanism bore a fruit, at Rome and among Protestants alike, which Alexandria in the days of the Neoplatonists had already ripened and proved. The seventeenth century was, in a special sense, the age of Mysticism, at once in Philosophy and Religion ;

the age of a new belief in the Spirit, Who, by His immediate action on the heart of man, was about to abolish the bondage of the Law in the formal letter thereof. From the orthodoxy of Napier and Newton, who spare time from their calculations for serious study of the Apocalypse, through the wild philosophy of Böhme to the mild devotion of the Quietists, a single path leads, that of the inward light, and a certain attitude is seen, that taken by almost the whole religion and philosophy of the time. Even the Latin races, for all their practical sense and lack of imagination, came under the spell. Spain had her Molinos, whom she lent to Italy, where his *Spiritual Guide* was written : a book that easily superseded Scripture itself among peoples never much accustomed to use the Sacred Writings. It will be said that the Jesuits attacked the Quietist and procured his condemnation, yet this solution was only reached after some hesitation, in which, for a while, it seemed doubtful whether Molinism might not convert the Society itself. And meanwhile the Jesuits had borrowed the mystical doctrine of the "Heart of Jesus" from the Puritan Goodwin ; had stamped it with a new sentimentality, making it the favourite devotion of the day, and were thus in full possession of a mysticism of their own, on which the Latin races laid eager hold from the material side it too surely offered. This strange transference, which gave rise to the "Sacro Cuore," is worth noting, as it assures us of the prevailing tendency of the age.

Here then we find one reason why the curve, in its freer forms, was the accepted architectural feature of the day. Such forms are natural to begin with, though they may end by being intensely artificial : they are the result of the action of wind upon water, and thus become the fit symbol of the life of regenerate men ; of those who, in the words of the Gospel, are "born of water and of the Spirit," that is the breath of God. This is the starting-point of all mystical doctrine, which, if it err, does so by the exaggeration of a truth ; pressing the freedom of the Spirit-led soul till it becomes a licence, where the written Law is forgotten, ignored, dispensed with as in Jesuit morals, insulted as in the practice of Antinomians. Similarly then, while there is no reason

why the free curve should not appear in architecture, and have its noble uses there, the Baroque became the favourite style of the age we are studying precisely because, in breaking the classic lines to make room for such adornments, or bending them till they were forced to admit still more inwardly the new forms, this architecture fitted exactly the thought of the time, and followed it in its worst excesses of mystical licence. Born of water, the shell in one kind lends its spirals to the noble decoration of Ionic or Corinthian capitals, or the noble construction of a mounting stair; in another the curved fan of its hollow valve fills rightly, because with restraint, many a Romanesque window-head. The Baroque (of San Stefano, Florence) uses a shell, and uses it to build a double stair —that which leads from the nave to the Chancel level—but how? Opening out its valves; laying them back into the stone in distorted form; exaggerating their ribs, and inviting the baptised to use these as steps in their approach to the Altar! Nothing could better illustrate the difference between the legitimate and the fantastic. Such an example dispenses us from further inquiry into the use and abuse of curves, wind and water-born; for in it the essential character of the Baroque stands revealed, and proves it the true expression of its time.

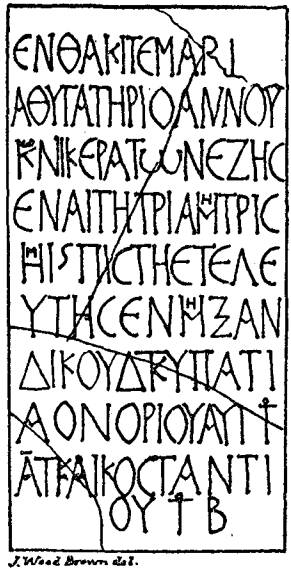
When the Church of Santa Felicità was finally rebuilt, the style of which we speak had already passed the time of its greatest force and luxuriance. As the Flamboyant Gothic was succeeded by the Perpendicular, so the buildings of the eighteenth century, when compared with those of the preceding age, show a new moderation of manner not far removed from the frigid. It is the failure of pulse and of life, which a new accuracy in detail strives without success to conceal; we have reached the old age of the Baroque. Yet even under this veil, of which we are very conscious in Santa Felicità, all the main characters of the former architecture still persist, though in attenuated shape. A classic pediment stands over the High Altar, but its apex is broken to admit the shield of the Guicciardini—patrons here—and the outlines of this shield are cut in fanciful scroll work so that the whole more than suggests the form of an *ex voto*, a burning heart. Similarly,

the gallery arches at the east end of the nave—one on each side—show lines whose culmination is characteristically marked by a deformed and empty shield in the same style. These curves in elevation, as they may be considered, are accompanied by others in plan, most visible in the forward sweep of the Grand Ducal Tribune over the main door, and in the fronts of the two nave galleries already mentioned; and these features, decorative and constructive alike, break the stiff classical lines about them in a way very germane to the date and style of this Church. Even in the restraint they show here such forms have their meaning, and one that our study of the Baroque in its strength has prepared us to understand. For if intellectual and moral impatience had by this time abated something of its former wildness, it certainly lay at the heart of Europe still for all the new correctness of her fashion; while the great Revolution had drawn perceptibly nearer.

We become too European in this study, but Santa Felicità may be trusted, as we turn from the architecture to the history of this church, to lead our minds home again to Florence and fix them on the abiding informing Spirit of the mediæval city.

When the ground was cleared on this site in 1736, and Ruggieri dug the foundations of the present Church, evidence at once appeared carrying back the Christian character of the place to the earliest days of the Faith in Florence. Already, in 1593, earlier excavations had resulted in the discovery of ancient Christian tombstones here, and now the harvest of these interesting inscriptions was more than doubled; while, under the altar of San Raffaello, old walls came to light with traces of frescoed decoration representing the Crucified Saviour. Plainly there must have been an early Church on this site, and a cemetery earlier still, for some of the stones are dated near the opening of the fifth century. The meaning of the whole is a riddle not too hard to read. The place where these discoveries were made stands just outside the bounds of ancient Florence, close beside the main south road. Such sites, as we see from many examples in the neighbourhood of Rome itself, were the favourite locality for the burial-grounds of pagan times. That the spot in question must have been so

used by Roman Florence appears from the name of the "luogo detto *Musileo*," which survived here as late as 1124, and from the tradition that the column, still standing in front of the Church, was erected in the fourteenth century on the site of an ancient pyramid no doubt the ornament of some pagan tomb, as that of Caius Cestius is at Rome.



GREEK TOMBSTONE

Here then the first Christians of Florence laid their dead, held their secret assemblies while yet their religion was under the ban, and, when liberty came with Constantine, built a Church or Oratory among these resting-places of the faithful departed. Since these days one sacred building after another has risen on this site, till at last the sixth—the present Church—came in the eighteenth century to complete a series begun so long before. The consecration of these successive places of worship has varied in the course of ages, yet more in name than in reality. At first, and for long, the cemetery Church was dedicated to the Maccabees; then, later, to Santa Felicità. But the connecting link is found in deeds of the period 1060-80, which speak of "Santa Felicità, the mother of the Maccabees"; and the change itself is but an example of that Romanising tendency in the Church of the West which must soon call for our more exact attention. Meanwhile it is worth pointing out that—whatever we may think of Manni's suggestion that Pope Leo's Homily on the Maccabees may have been delivered in this very Church as he passed to Rome in 452—the dedication is not without its own significance, especially on such a site. For this Church stands close under the hill of San Miniato, where the bones of the Saint found rest after he had fought with wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Florence. Such a consecration would explain, here as elsewhere, the numerous graves of those who, in after times, desired to be buried *ad martyres*.

To this agrees well the dedication of the neighbouring Church to the Maccabees, the martyred precursors, under Judaism, of the Christian victims and witnesses. So the whole carries us back to the Decian persecution of the third century, and makes vivid and even local the beginnings of Florentine Christianity under the cloud of contempt, too soon succeeded by the fire of persecution: a cloud and fire which yet formed the guiding pillar of this Israel as of that to which the Maccabees themselves belonged.

These details have their interest, not only to the student of local history who desires to trace the fortunes of this Church, but in a wider sense as well; for they throw much light on our proper subject here: the nature and development of the Florentine Spirit. For thus, beyond all question, we touch the beginnings of the strongest influence ever brought to bear on this or on any people. Christianity, wherever it comes, brings a profound change, and moulds the spirit of those who embrace it to new issues. This, then, is what we expect, and what we find, at Florence, where her new faith brought the largest contribution ever made to the character that came to distinguish the city. It cannot be vain then that we should examine its own distinction: that which made Florentine Christianity what it was; that which influenced its later history and development.

We begin with the fact, already noticed, that this Faith came to Florence from Greece, and found its first footing in the Greek colony established in the city. This fact deserves repetition here all the more because the proof of it is found at Santa Felicità; in the language of the early tombstones discovered on this site, which show that Greek was still commonly used at Florence during the fifth century A.D. Already, in an introductory chapter, we have touched on this, the original form of Florentine Christianity, and have found in it the supreme example of that eastern inspiration without which the Latin genius has never reached its highest level. Without insisting further on so general a view of the matter, we now interpret the facts in another sense, and one even more germane to our present purpose. This Greek colony, which was the human instrument of heaven in giving Florence her new Faith,

had been planted there by no miracle, but came and endured because of the commercial importance of the place. The sea brought these foreigners, the Arno guided them, and Florence gave them hospitality willingly because of the trade they brought and maintained ; they have left enduring trace of their trade route at Pisa and Empoli, names which, however we may interpret them, speak loudly still of Greek commercial posts in the Arno valley from the sea to the hills of Florence. But surely, if this be so, we have found the link needed to connect our present study with the subject which last engaged us. The substance and the spirit of Florence not only dwell together as the soul in the body, but there is a causal relation between them ; the first, if not the author of the second, at least brings it that which, more than any other influence, contributes to its character and form. For such a contribution is Christianity, which Greeks bring to Florence, and bring it here because trade bends their steps hither. Thus, as the body influences the spirit of man which it surrounds and supports, so does the substantial commerce of Florence contribute to the shaping of the invisible essential spirit of the place : a faith which may be shaken, corrupted or deformed, but never quite destroyed, or deprived of all consequence and influence. Of such changes then as, being possible, became actual, we are now to speak.

For changes of weight and importance time is necessary, and time takes its way with Florence as with all else under the sun. The centuries pass, the end of the first millennium draws near, and it becomes at last no longer an anachronism to speak of Guelphism—that spirit which nine out of ten inquirers would readily declare to have been the peculiar characteristic of Florence : what distinguished her above all from the neighbouring cities. Now Guelphism is not Christianity, yet, plainly, without Christianity Guelphism were impossible ; it is therefore Christianity with a difference, modified under the many influences which came to make of the Catholic Faith a sectarian policy. It must be our task—not an easy one—to study, now and in the succeeding chapters, the history of these influences and of this development and change.

The first thing that strikes an inquirer who approaches this

subject as we have done, is the veil that time has drawn over the verities of early Florentine Christianity. How comes it that it has been left to a student of our own days[1] to discover what should have been obvious all along? The early tombstones of Santa Felicità were deciphered, one by one, as the pick and spade restored them to the light of day: how was the sense of the whole left sleeping? The words *catacomba*, *cataletto*, and *catafalco* have never ceased to come readily to Italian lips, nor have the names of Miniato, Zanobi, Eugenio, and Reparata been forgotten; what has intervened to rob that early Greek colony of its honour in bringing the Faith of Christ to Florence? Something, no doubt, must be ascribed to the mere lapse of time since days so remote, and more to the barbarian onset which sharply cut off the old world from the newer ages which followed, but most to a deliberate rewriting of history which brought the lives of these saints down to date, and gave foreigners and colonists an Italian, even a Roman pedigree; obscuring thus for many ages the true relation and succession of events. Such a distortion of facts must have had a cause, and the origin of so mistaken a nationalism, when revealed, will be found deeply connected with the main subject of our inquiry.

We have here to do with the reception of Christianity by the Roman people, and it is evident that the mental character of the nation, whether native or acquired, must have soon and deeply modified the new religion as received among them. Now in that character one of the deepest traits lay in a kind of exaggerated practicality due to the absence from the Roman mind of what may be called the philosophic imagination; the power, that is, of dealing firmly and immediately with abstract ideas. Plato, no doubt, had his followers at Rome, but they were few and exotic; very much as Christianity itself at its first appearance in Florence. For the native Italian sought his ideas incarnate in tangible realities, and preferred to deal with these on a level which offered immediate issue in the external, the material, and the practical. This tendency was, as we should expect, persistent, being founded in some ultimate, perhaps physical, character common to the race,

[1] Davidsohn, *op. cit.*

and it distinguished for many ages those who, till the North awoke, remained the unchallenged leaders of Western thought. Hence then the chief phenomenon of Scholasticism, as that thought came to be called in its highest and most abstract form. The Schools had their heresies as the Church had, but Scholastic Orthodoxy, as is well known, was formed by the prevalence and permanence of Realism in its more moderate teaching; the thought of those whose motto was *universalia in rebus;* who conceived of ideas as really existent in the things themselves, whose appeal to the mind demanded their classification in *genera* and *species*. It was in this sense that the works of Aristotle, the great text of the Schools, were read and expounded: the Latin mind thus developing a mode of philosophic thinking which betrayed its true character and essential limitations. Nor must we neglect to notice a necessary development of such a mode of thought. If the *genus* is a reality that subsists more or less in each individual of the species, it follows that each idea must find its supreme abode in some one commanding example of the kind, under which the rest range themselves; partaking in less and ever lessening degree of the idea which makes them what they are. Hence what may be called the philosophic hierarchy was a necessary consequence of Latin modes of thought.

Here a question naturally arises; that of the form which Christianity would be likely to assume when dealt with by the Roman mind. Let us take one chief article of the new faith, the doctrine of the city, the general assembly of the faithful, and forecast the fate likely to befall it here. If even the Jews, at their first hearing of the Kingdom of Christ, thought of an earthly sovereignty in terms of the kingdoms of this world, how much more surely the Romans, being what they were, would identify the *City* of the Church with Rome, and think of it under the forms of their own imperial Government. They might indeed accept the teaching that "where two or three are gathered together" in Christ's name His Kingdom is come and His City begun; just as the *Municipia* and even the *Coloniæ* had something of the capital in them, and held a real relation to the purple whose power covered

the limits of Empire. But a City *par excellence* there must be; a capital Christian community visible and tangible in its pre-eminence, and where should one look for it save in Rome, to which God had given, these many centuries past, the dominion of His Italy and of His world! If we have rightly gauged the native tendency of the Roman mind, it is certain that absence of imagination, with a strong practical bent; a disposition to neglect naked ideas, to demand their incarnation in visible things, and to expect what we have called a *hierarchy* in the manifestation of these, could have no other result than this. Ritualism, the undue materialisation of spiritual things, and the technical Hierarchy in Church Government, might and did appear as branches from this stem, but the root of the matter lies where we have sought it, in the conception of the Church itself, which the Latin mind could hardly entertain without modifying and localising it in the sense we have indicated.

Coming now to the history, we find ourselves in presence of facts which assure us that nothing intervened to blunt or attenuate the native working of the Italian mind on the new problem thus submitted to it. At Rome under Constantine, as at Florence when, in 406, the victory of Stilicho made Christianity popular, what happened was that the Church was taken by storm; a multitude of people hastening to enrol themselves in her Communion under impulse unprepared by any adequate knowledge or reflection. One day Christianity was banned or ignored, the next adopted by thousands who could render no reason for the faith they so suddenly professed. How certain then, that, when reflection had its opportunity, the natural reaction which followed a conversion so superficial would take the form of modification and interpretation in which the ideal of Christianity would be altered in terms of native Italian thought.

We have seen sufficiently what these terms were, and hardly could they begin to rule ere a remarkable historic fact made their application to the new order of things even more certain and conclusive. Constantine removed the seat of his Empire to the shores of the Bosporus, and his coadjutors in the West soon let

the reins of power fall from their feeble hands. Henceforth, if Rome was to retain the prestige to which past history entitled her, it must be on other grounds than those of continued and secular Empire. The ancient capital might indeed be trusted to appeal, as she appeals to-day, to Italian sentiment, but now, in view of the rivalry of Constantinople, henceforth the seat of Empire, new ground must be discovered on which that sentiment might rest, and to which for ever it might appeal. In this sense then, and more or less consciously with this purpose, was the Christian ideal of the city modified by Italian thought. As the fortunes of the capital fell, the Church stood forth in her new form as a power which that fall had unveiled and set free. The Bishop of Rome sat in Cæsar's chair with the dim figure of Peter, Prince of the Apostles, growing ever more distinct and imposing in the background. The Peter-legend—a skilful embroidery on scanty and uncertain data, took shape and coherence. To this as an additional underbuilding were added the forged Decretals, and the fictitious (*c.* 775) Donation of Constantine as props, respectively, of the spiritual and temporal authority of the Pontiffs. Thus Constantinople had its answer, and stoutly replied through the Trullan Council in such sort that the great Schism of East and West, separating sharply between Greeks and Latins, was soon an accomplished fact. So far have we moved from the early days when Florence took her faith from the Greeks, and the form of the mediæval Church of the West lay hidden in the distant future.

To Florence then, at last, we return, in her early mediæval period, that we may see how the Italian treatment of the Christian idea dealt with the narrower, the local, problem. The time we have spent in Italy at large has not been wasted; it has prepared us to relate easily to the general order of things a number of details which might otherwise have seemed unique, eccentric, and inexplicable. Passing by the continued reverence of Florence for Rome as a matter treated already in an earlier chapter, we find the fictitious Donation of Constantine edited, as it were, for Tuscan use in the highly suspicious Donative of Charlemagne; ascribed, observe, to the very period which saw the larger forgery. It was

on the lines of these deeds that the Countess Matilda, dying in 1115, drew her authentic testament, in which she actually, so far as her power went, resigned the lands she held, and Tuscany among them, making the Church her heir. No matter that the real effect of such a dying deed might well be, and actually was, disputed by the testator's feudal Superior. We cite it here as a proof of Matilda's purpose, and of the light in which leading Italian minds regarded Rome.

Nor is it less plain, if we recur to the question with which our inquiry opened, that the editing to which Florence subjected the lives of her early saints, nay the whole view she came to hold regarding the beginnings of her Christian Faith, were inspired by the same tendency. At Florence a Bishop, of whom history knows nothing, Frentinus or Frontinus, a Roman disciple of Peter, plays the legendary part which a like story had assigned to his Master in Rome. Nay we had nearly said that Peter himself comes on the scene, for, most probably, the account of the Apostle's landing at the mouth of the Arno, and celebrating Mass where the Church of San Piero in Grado now stands, is nothing but a later dress that covers some lingering tradition of how the Christian Greeks first declared themselves on Tuscan soil. However this may be, it is certain that just such was the treatment meted out to the early heads and heroes of the Florentine Church. They were foreigners, but must become Italians, Romans even, in homage to what the West had meanwhile come to consider as the divinely appointed Capital of Christendom; a homage which was soon conceived of as involving the belief that the whole country had obtained the Faith from this and from no other source.

Coming then finally to the Monument itself which has given occasion for this study, we find that its narrower history follows, even in trivial details, the general line which it has been our object to trace. That which had been the Church of the Maccabees becomes, before A.D. 1100, the shrine of Santa Felicità—a Roman matron, of course—whose seven sons, like the Jewish heroes on whose history this later legend is modelled, died with their mother in defence of their Faith. Thus this building, in its altered dedica-

tion which has survived to our own days, may well stand, modern though its present fabric be, as a witness, not only of the times of primitive Florentine Christianity, with which it so surely connects through its site, but even of that deforming development which, as time passed, drew a veil over the true facts, and showed instead the altered shape of a Church become Italian, Mediæval, above all Roman.

Well was it for Florence that this was not the only influence acting on her Spirit and determining her Fate, or her place in the history of Europe and of the world had been far other than in fact it was. For this that we have been considering may be called the policy of the lesser Italy; just as we speak of some among ourselves as dwellers in Little Britain, or Little Englanders. Those long ago who said, "Look and see, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," were not the men with whom lay the future, or who made of what began as the belief of a few Jews the Faith of the Christian world. So the temper we have observed is indeed that of the old Pharisees, and does what in it lies to deprive the Church, as she yields to it, of all title to the glorious names of Catholic and Apostolic. To say that this is a reactionary force acting upon Florence is true, yet not all the truth. For the past to which it appeals is not the past of true history but of legend, supported by more or less conscious tampering with documents, which are suppressed and replaced by others freshly written *ad hoc*, in the hasty zeal that knows no scruple when once it has drawn its pen in defence of a favourite policy.

The limits of such an influence are plain and its days numbered. But it counted for much in the life of the city, and for that reason we, as students of the Florentine Spirit, may well weigh its power. At the best it was but one of the forces that played upon this people and helped to form their characteristic temper; at the worst it was the drag on the wheels of their Triumph, the force that delayed their day. In the Christian world at large—we speak of the whole West—this was what kept back for many ages the advent of modern times; while as to Florence it may be held to have at last involved her brightest destiny as the teacher of a Europe new-born with all the sad circumstances of her own decay and destruction.

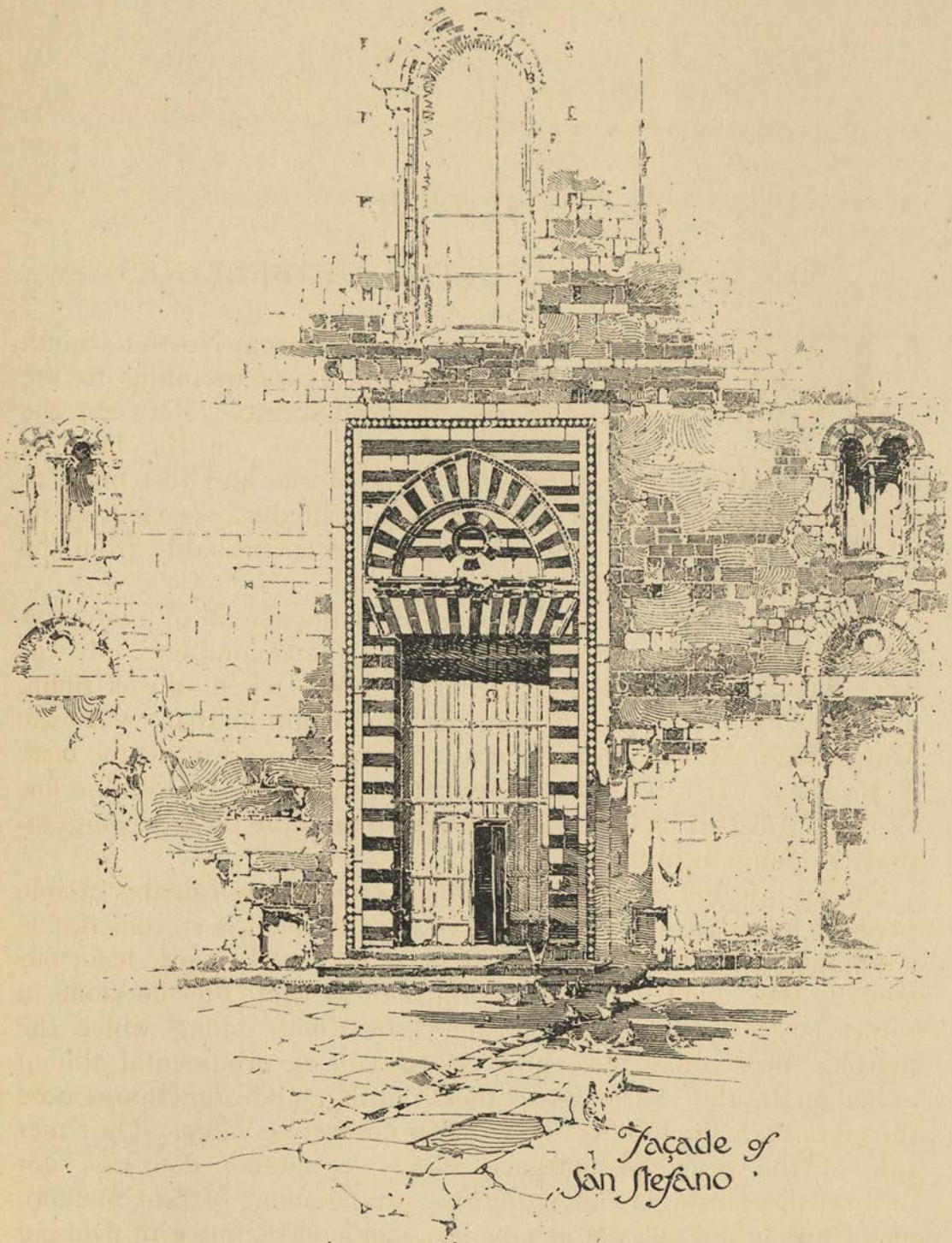
CHAPTER II

SAN STEFANO AND THE GHIBELLINES

THE ancient road traversing Florence from North to South left the city by a principal gate corresponding to the northern access of the Ponte Vecchio. Between the Gate and the Bridge ran the road, on the lines of the present street named the Por' Santa Maria, and just off it to the East stood the Church of San Stefano, called *ad pontem* from its relation to the Bridge, or *ad portam ferream*, probably from the common name of the adjoining Gate.

This Church, which first appears in a document of 1116, was collegiate, with a cloister and chapter of Canons complete. It was twice rebuilt, first in the fourteenth century when it was richly adorned with sculpture and paintings, and again in 1649, when the Marchese A. M. Bartolommei caused it to be reduced to the taste of the time. It will be remembered that this latter restoration has already furnished us with a characteristic example of the exaggerations so common in the Baroque.

Of the original San Stefano, then, nothing now remains visible save the lower part of the façade, yet that of itself is so remarkable a monument of the distant past that we may well choose it for our study in this chapter. It is a wall, built of grey Fiesole stone in rather large blocks much consumed by time, among which the marbles surrounding the central doorway in an ornamental oblong alone retain the sharpness of their cutting, and something more therefore than the fulness of their first decorative value. On either side of the principal entrance stands a smaller doorway, undecorated, pointing to the primitive arrangement of San Stefano, as a Church laid out, not as now in a single nave, but with flanking aisles as well. Above these aisle doors the wall is pierced by two



Façade of
San Stefano

bifore—twin-light windows—that are perfect gems in their kind; each with its delicate dividing shaft and double-arched head in black and white marble, outlined here and there by traces of the exquisite corded moulding that once defined the whole. Yet these windows, beautiful as they are, must yield in interest to the principal doorway, the centre of the composition. This, with its lintel and blind relieving arch overhead, and its surrounding marbles, has an air of the East that is at once perceptible and at first sight puzzling, suggesting the decoration of a mosque rather than of a Christian Church—a suggestion which the flanking *bifore*, cut almost in the form of the Moorish *ajimez* windows, do much to enforce. We feel that we are in presence of some architectural problem, though exactly of what nature we are not at once prepared to say. An accident furnishes us with the hint we need. All this decoration surrounds the central door itself: two simple valves plated throughout in smooth metal. On one of these an old horseshoe has been nailed—tradition says the steed of Charlemagne cast it as the great Emperor passed here with his Paladins on the way to Rome. However this may be, the shoe nailed to the door helps us to see in the party-coloured marbles of the door-head its own form repeated in all the dignity of solid masonry; an undeniable approach to the horseshoe arch of the Moors. This, then, is the problem in its extreme form: how such an arch came to be built on Italian soil, and above the door of a Florentine Church. So stated it may well prove insoluble, but, in the hope that this eccentric example of its occurrence may throw some light on the origin of the form itself, we do well to pursue the subject. The façade of San Stefano might have given us the text for an inquiry into the nature and progress of architectural decoration in black and white, had not the marbles of Santa Maria Novella, and, by anticipation, those of San Giovanni, already (p. 208) led our thoughts in this direction. San Stefano, then, shall rather tell us what it can of the origin of the horseshoe arch.

Some considerable light has of late been thrown on this curious and difficult subject by the researches of Mr. W. H. Goodyear,[1] under-

[1] Mr. W. H. Goodyear, *Illustrated Catalogue of Photographs*, etc. p. 11: Edinburgh, 1905. See also his *Architectural Refinements*, Macmillan Company, New York, 1902.

taken not *ad hoc*, but in the course of his general study of the irregularities of mediæval building: a light no doubt all the purer because thus arising unsought and unexpectedly. He has found an outward lean, from the ground upwards, in the supporting walls from which roof arches spring, and notices that "there is a certain analogy in this arrangement with the lines of the horseshoe arch; with the distinction that the 'horseshoe' effect is applied to the whole construction, and does not terminate at the supports." This effect he notices first in the Cathedrals of Vicenza and Laon, but presently traces eastward to Constantinople, where he finds it in various Byzantine Churches such as the Balaban Aga Mesjid, the Monastery of the Chorah, and S. Maria Diaconissa. Messrs. Lethaby and Swainson had already drawn attention to this feature in Santa Sofia, and had enforced their observations by an interesting quotation from Procopius, who, in his contemporary account of the great Church, says that it "rises from the ground, not in a straight line, but setting back somewhat obliquely." Mr. Goodyear also notices (*op. cit.*, p. 12) that in the Monastery Church of the Chorah this effect is enhanced by "a constructive stepping back of the bands of casing under the springing of the vaulting." The same may be observed at Santa Felicità at Florence, where the left wall of the Nave seems to lean, very slightly but perceptibly, outwards, and the spring of the roof-arch over it is brought forward to the front of the principal trabeation by a casing in the form of a reversed bracket. That Santa Felicità, though rebuilt thus in the eighteenth century, should show such peculiarities need not surprise us; for Mr. Goodyear has proved that they exist in an unbroken series down to the times of the Renaissance, and even to the seventeenth century, when they appear in the Schottenkirche of Vienna. The earliest examples being found at Constantinople, he naturally concludes that the device in question was the property of Byzantine architecture, and travelled West with the influence of the school to which it belonged.

All this inclines us to think that we are on the right track, and, perhaps, not far from discovering the true origin of the horseshoe arch. For it has long been known that the Arabian and Moorish

schools of architecture, which made that form a principal feature of their style, sprang indeed from Constantinople, and were in fact Byzantine building in its secondary and modified form. The first mosque builders came to the service of the Saracen from the city by the Bosphorus, and it is much to be assured, as we now are, that they must have brought with them at least that peculiar taste for arches set on diverging supports, which explains the immense vogue of the horseshoe arch in the new school which they founded and inspired.

Between this general taste, however, and its full and final satisfaction in the horseshoe arch, must have intervened the actual invention of the form in question; on which it should be said, that the examples cited by Mr. Goodyear from Constantinople and elsewhere throw but little light. Let us see whether the façade of San Stefano may not help us here. We propose it now, not because the form of the principal door-head offers a completely developed horseshoe, or as if it could have furnished the Moors with their model—which would be both contrary to fact and absurd—but as a type of that construction from which we may feel sure the perfect form was, in fact, evolved, wherever and at whatever time that evolution took place.

The larger lines of construction in this façade are plain enough. The door-head is closed above by a deepish lintel, over which is turned a relieving arch in what may be called "Tuscan" form; that is, semicircular on the intrados, and with the extrados slightly but gracefully pointed. This combination of lintel and relieving arch is found over the gates of Constantinople (A.D. 450); an early mediæval example of its use may be seen in Tuscany at the Pieve of Arliano near Lucca: a church said to date from the first half of the eighth century. It was, in fact, a favourite form with Tuscan builders of the Lombard time, and, as the art of sculpture recovered and advanced, this use, for a very obvious reason, became more and more characteristic of the style. For, first, the deep lintel, set in full view of all who entered the Church, was naturally chosen as the chief field of the sculptor's art; and then, just because the lintel had received the finest decoration at

command, its due protection from the weight of the wall became increasingly imperative, and the relieving arch above it was sometimes doubled, not only for the sake of added decoration, but to secure the safety of that which the lintel already bore. Good examples of this stage in the development may be seen at Pistoia, above the doors of S. Giovanni Fuorcivitas, Sant' Andrea, and San Pietro Maggiore, dating from the period 1150–1220.

Hitherto we have noticed only the larger lines of arch and lintel as these are visible at San Stefano: it is now time that we should examine their more minute constructive and decorative details. To begin with, the work here is carried out in a dichromy of white and black, or rather dark green, marble. In the arch above, these are employed, as is common and natural, in alternate voussoirs; not so common is the manner of the lintel, built, not hewn from a single block; formed in voussoirs as a perfectly flat arch, and so admitting, in the alternate black and white of its marbles, the same dichroic decoration which we have noticed in the arch above.

On the general meaning of such decoration a word or two must again be said ere we pass further. The dichromy of Italian mediæval architecture we have found (p. 217) to be of two kinds, applied and constructive; of which the exterior wall-panels of the Baptistery of Florence, and the doorway we are now examining, may stand as the respective types; while the façade of Santa Maria Novella has shown us a combination of both. The former of these seems to have been used as a ready and inexpensive means of emphasising exterior architectural hints, so as to recover, as far as might be, the lost effects of light and shade proper to a fully formed classic front with its free peristyle. Similarly, then, the constructive dichromy, laid in alternate blocks and bands of black and white, can only have one meaning; it is the later device adopted to replace, cheaply and easily, the lights and shades of mediæval sculpture, when and wherever this richer and more costly decoration was unattainable. The façade of San Michele at Pavia has sculpture in bands that alternate with courses of plain stone. A like alternation, carried out in black and white, is found in countless

churches of Tuscany, even where, as at Lucca and Pistoia, sculpture still fights for its place and keeps it, especially in the lintels of the principal doors. Here, at San Stefano, the new decoration is carried to its logical conclusion, and the lintel is forced to admit a constructive dichromy by the device of building it in the form of a flattened arch. Henceforth the mason could fully decorate what he built in this style without depending anywhere on the aid of the sculptor's chisel.

Leaving the general question, we must now come to the particular point of this inquiry in the power of such decoration to generate, or at least to suggest, the form of the horseshoe arch. Notice then that as soon as sculpture had given way to constructive dichromy in the lintel, and lintel and arch were alike built of black and white stone in alternate voussoirs, the moment of this discovery was at hand. For what builder could plan such decoration without of necessity studying the relation between the lines of the extrados, the intrados, and those which divide the composite lintel at the point where its relieving arch comes to rest upon it? There must be concordance here, or the eye will be quick to feel and resent its absence. The builder of the great door at San Stefano has adopted a very simple and natural solution of what, after all, is no difficult problem. He cuts and lays his stones so that the line of the intrados coincides with the outer face of the first lintel voussoir on each side. But thus, inevitably, the eye, travelling downwards from the upper keystone, does not stay at the lower limit of the true arch ; it passes on, following the slope of the lintel voussoirs, and thus finds in arch and lintel, read together, the form of the horseshoe arch. That the designer of San Stefano saw this form and delighted in it is perfectly plain. The last voussoir of his lintel on either side is planned and set, as we have said, to correspond with the line of the intrados and continue it. On the outside of these stones the order of the masonry changes, so that to each adjoin three others laid horizontially, their united depth just corresponding to the height of the single vertical voussoir. It is upon the outer corner of the uppermost of these horizontal stones that the line of the extrados comes to rest. No chance then that this, like the

intrados, should be prolonged downward by the lines of the construction itself. Or rather, being so prolonged, but vertically, and therefore inharmoniously with the inclined progress of the intrados line along the face of the first voussoir, some correction is necessary here. This the builder supplies by the work of the chisel; cutting a fine diagonal moulding from the outer corner down through the three horizontals, parallel to the slope of the first voussoir, till he can bring it by a short return to meet the upper corner of the doorway. Thus the lines of intrados and extrados are made to accompany each other, even below the limits of the normal arch itself; so that it becomes certain that the builder, who gained this harmony as it were in spite of the mason, both saw and approved the resulting form of the horseshoe thus obtained, and by him so subtly yet surely affirmed.

It will be said that all this may be true and we yet no nearer the solution of the problem. A happy accident at San Stefano revealed the form of the new arch to Italy, but Italy never developed it; that work was left to the Moors, and, as we can hardly think they drew their inspiration from this Church, the origin of the horseshoe arch among the people who made it definitely their own remains as yet unexplained. To which it may be answered that though we do not know, and perhaps may never discover, just where and when the form in question first appeared among Eastern peoples,[1] there is yet much reason to conclude that its advent must have come about in the very manner we have just studied at San Stefano.

For, first, there is abundant proof that Eastern architecture knew and used the composite lintel, built in a dichromy of alternate colours. Such lintels are found above the doors of the Cairene Mosques, especially those of the Sultan Hassan and of Quayt Bey. Now the composite lintel is a weak form, and one demanding therefore as its accompaniment the relieving arch overhead. And any people, Arabian or other, who built arch and

[1] Goodyear found it in the "very early Byzantine Church (? palace) of Raboth Ammon in eastern Syria." Its appearance in the Spanish Church of Baños (Palencia), built A.D. 661 by Reccesvinto, king of the Visigoths, has been used to prove that from this nation the Moors learned it on their arrival in Spain. How absurd this idea is may be seen from the fact that the Mosque of Fostat, built A.D. 640, already shows such arches and in abundance.

lintel in an alternate dichromy, must at once have faced the problem of their decorative arrangement; nor could this be well solved save on lines like those followed at San Stefano. There is thus the strongest probability that in this very way and in no other did architects first discover the arch-form of which, when found, the Saracen builders made such splendid use.

Nay, further, there is material in the Moorish architecture itself that converts this probability into a certainty. To find it we go, not to some obscure and forgotten example, but to no less a monument of the style than the world-famous Mosque of Cordova. Studied even in a photograph, its principal entrance shows a strange correspondence with the façade of San Stefano,[1] so that as we compare the two, our sense of the exotic, the Eastern, element in the Florentine example proves fully justified. At Cordova, as at Florence, the main door stands framed in a decorated panel, as it were in an architectural emphasis; while, in each example alike it is flanked by a pair of beautiful *ajimez* windows, set lower in the wall of Cordova only because there they have taken in part the place of the side doors at Florence. This general correspondence may even be pursued in detail—the moulding over the main arch-head, the heavy bar defining the lintel above; the gradual and successive retreat of arch, tympanum, and lintel from the upper and outer wall-face—these are features common to both examples; as is also the alternation of black and white, relief or retreat, ornament or plain surface, in the alternate voussoirs.

One great difference, it is true, makes itself instantly felt; yet rather to the advantage of our argument. At Cordova the decoration is not constructive as at Florence, but is carried out in the favourite Moorish *appliqué* of plaster, moulded, incised, and inlaid. Perishable as compared with the marbles of San Stefano, this superficial decoration has given way to time; has parted as if some richly wrought veil had been dropped or rent, so that through its fall we stand face to face with the naked facts of the case. The underlying construction at Cordova is not the horseshoe arch at all, but just that simple combination of the semicircular

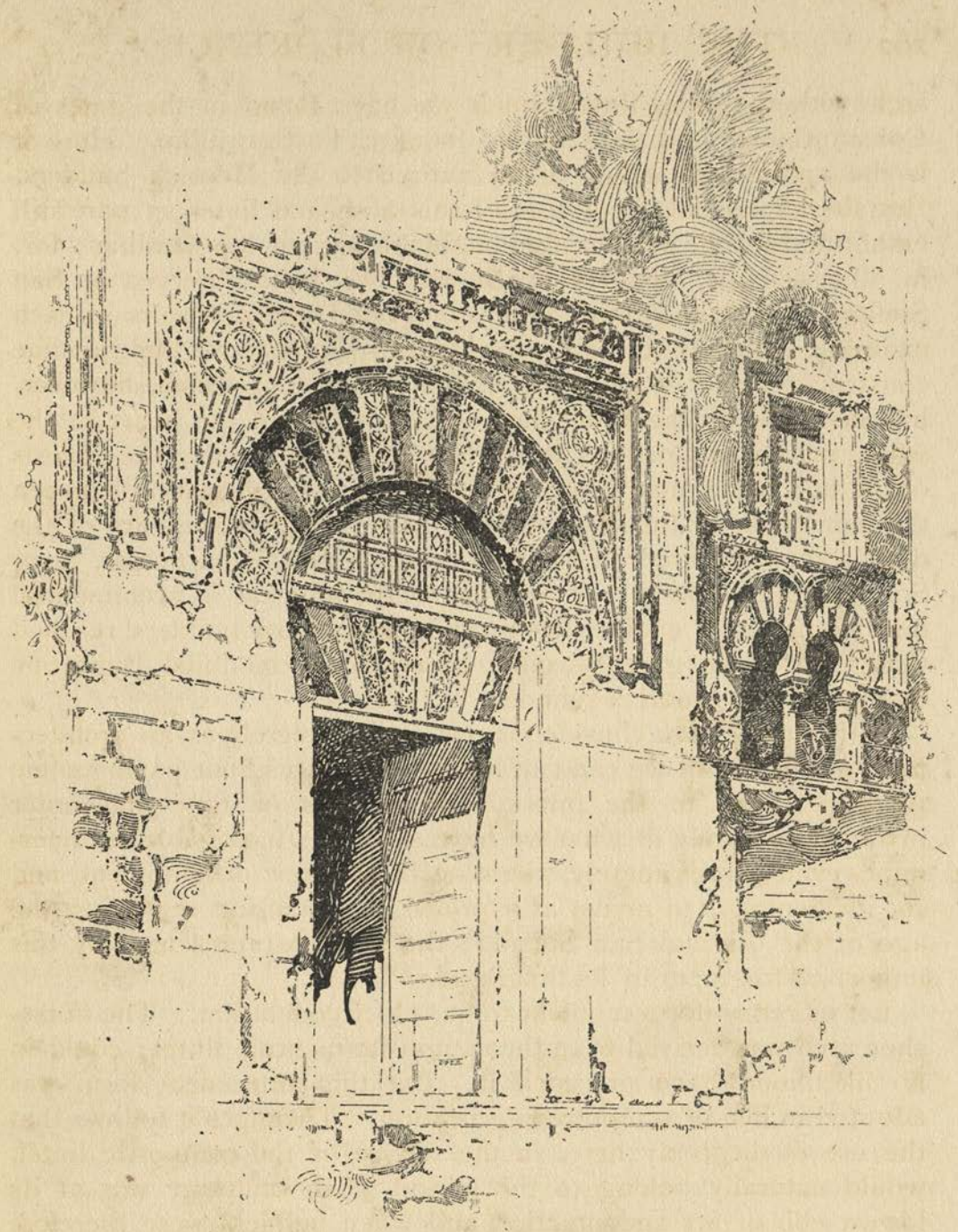
[1] Cf. Laurent y Ca, Madrid, "Cordoba—2150," with Alinari, "Florence, 3708."

arch with the deep lintel which we have found in the gates of Constantinople and the Church doors of Tuscany alike. Here it is the undoubted legacy of Byzantium to the Moorish builders. But the superficial decoration of this arch and lintel, in part still extant and for the rest easily imaginable, is not less familiar; for, in all essentials, it agrees with what we have observed at San Stefano. Arch and lintel alike are divided into voussoirs in each example, with this sole difference that in Florence we find genuine construction and at Cordova applied ornament; which, however, has been laid on the same lines. And, to touch the heart of the whole matter, at Cordova as at Florence, it is plain that the genesis of the horseshoe must be referred to the necessary relation between the semicircle of the Romanesque arch and the voussoirs of the deep composite lintel on which it stands. In this particular, then, San Stefano marks a true and important moment in architectural development; it enables us to understand how builders reached that form which gave its chief glory to the modified Byzantine manner of the Moorish schools.

Hitherto we have considered our subject merely as an architectural problem, but we can can hardly leave it without paying some passing regard to the important questions of time and order involved so surely in what we have said. Is it possible to determine, even approximately, the date of the new development, and so, incidentally, to arrive at a probable conclusion regarding the age of the original San Stefano; the Church represented by this important fragment of its first façade?[1]

Let us return for a moment to our chief conclusion. The horseshoe arch was derived from the composite dichroic lintel; could in no likelihood have preceded it. But this antecedent form was adopted in lieu of sculptured decoration. Therefore it follows that the use of dichromy here, in the device of the composite lintel, would naturally belong to the period when sculpture was at its lowest ebb of art and practice, and when builders were therefore

[1] The following argument applies of course to Italy alone, where the horseshoe arch seems to have been adopted much later than in the East. See, however, the sarcophagus of the Villa Mattei, *sæc.* III-IV. A.D., cited in the *Architectural Review*, Vol. XV, No. 91, p. 250.



Doorway of Mosque.
Cordova

forced to seek some ready and easy substitute for the lost subtleties of its light and shade. Now, by common consent, such a period of decadence is to be found in the eighth century or thereby. So that towards the close of that period, at the year A.D. 800, if our reasoning is just, we should expect to find in being not only the composite lintel, nor the complete constructive dichromy for the sake of which that form—practised long before by the Romans—was reïntroduced, but any consequence, such as the horseshoe arch, to which such practice might naturally lead.

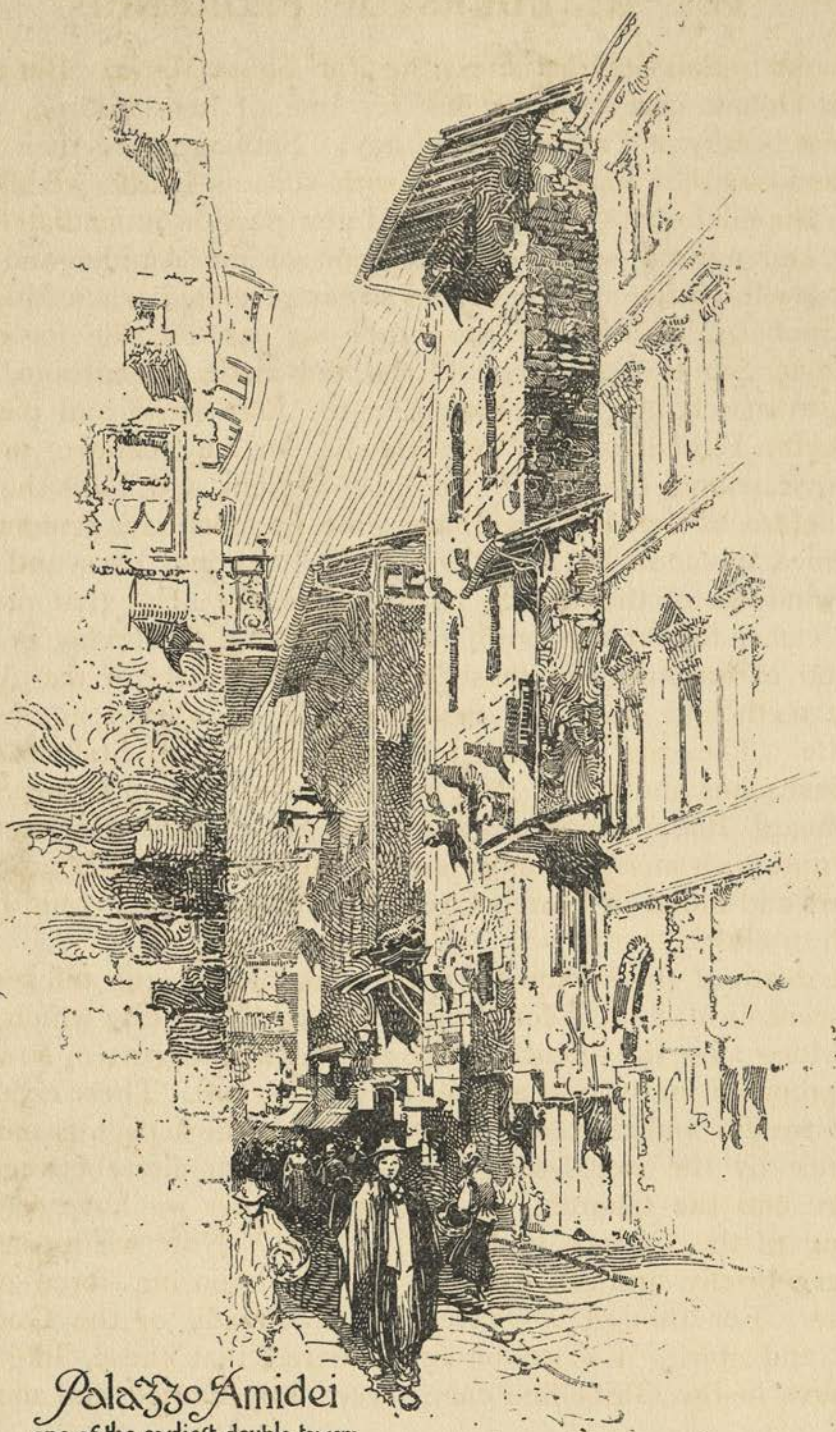
But, in Spain of the Moors, the close of the eighth century saw the building of the Mosque at Cordova; that very building from which we have already borrowed so significant a detail. And the Florence of these days was the Florence of Charlemagne; that great chief of the Paladins to whom popular tradition has long and obstinately ascribed the rebuilding of the city by the Arno. The Emperor, it is said, kept Pasch here in 786–7, and, as we have already noted, the iron shoe nailed to the door of San Stefano is believed to have dropped from his horse's hoof as he then passed to Rome. May it not be that there is some truth embodied in the legend: that the church *ad pontem, seu ad portam ferream*, between the bridge and the river gate of Florence, was in fact built in the days of the great Emperor, and has survived to our own in this fragment which theory would thus seem to assign to the same remarkable period?

Another legend of this place affords us an easy passage from the Architecture to the History of San Stefano. The iron shoe nailed on this door belonged, it is otherwise said, to the white palfrey on which, as Malespini tells us, Buondelmonte mounted for his last fatal ride across the bridge. This story may be taken as a picturesque affirmation of the part played by this Church in the famous tragedy of 1215; a matter which may be accepted as both true and important in the main, whatever criticism may say of its details as found in the Chronicles of Florence.

Buondelmonte, to follow the account of Malespini, was one of the bravest youths of the city, and pledged to wed his peer, a daughter of the Amidei, whose double tower with its grim lions

still looks to San Stefano across the Por' Santa Maria. But a lady of the Donati cast eyes on him for one of her children, a girl of great beauty and marriageable age. She contrived their meeting, and saw her plans crowned with success in the wedding to which Buondelmonte's weakness and new passion immediately led. Great and natural was the indignation of the Amidei and their friends, who gathered to plan and swear revenge; when Mosca of the Lamberti, crying *cosa fatta capo ae*, cast the die for death. On Easter Sunday, then, behold the new-made bridegroom, all in white to match his steed, mount in the Oltr' Arno and pass the bridge for Florence. He rode slowly, we may believe, on that narrow way amid the crowd of holiday-makers, and if his thoughts went before, as they may well have done, he must have remembered how, in a moment, he would reach the lions and pass under the very windows of the woman he had slighted. But that moment never came, for, at the bridge head, hard by the image of Mars the god of war, he met those human wild beasts of the Amidei whose teeth and claws his treachery had sharpened against his own life. They had gathered that morning in San Stefano to lay their last plans and assure their strength, and, issuing thence, when they heard Buondelmonte was on his way, threw him from his horse and, with many wounds, opened through his death a fountain of tears and blood in Florence which a hundred years could hardly stanch or close.

The death of Buondelmonte is the most picturesque and remarkable scene in a contest for the supremacy of the city which, as it lasted long after the offence to the Amidei was forgotten, so it had been prepared for at least a hundred years before. These civic wars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were the aspect assumed in Florence by the world-wide struggle for dominion between the Empire and the Church. In our last chapter we have seen the shaping of the Church in mediæval form. Now we must look, however briefly and superficially, at the opposing force of the Empire. For though we have spoken already of the Guelphic cause and spirit, it is to be remembered that these, like their opposites in the Ghibelline camp, were only formed and matured



Palazzo Amidei
one of the earliest double towers

by the opposition they encountered. The struggles of Church and Empire had their fruitful result in the mutual interaction that shaped these contrasted powers. Nay more, for, as we shall see, their pressure upon Florence from opposite sides, instead of crushing the city, created it, or at least brought about the development of that which, rather than all her Guelphic *pose*, is to be held for the true and authentic Spirit of the place.

This is not the time to attempt the Imperial story, save as, in a moment, its larger lines may be indicated, and the great fact to which they led affirmed. The Empire rose upon the ruins left by Barbarian inroads; itself the high-water heaped up by successive waves of conquest. The Goths, the Huns, the Vandals, the Lombards crossed the Alps, nation after nation, to possess the fair southern land. At last came the Franks, and with them Charlemagne, to whom the Pope transferred the great title of Cæsar that Constantine had once carried to the East. All this, when the first shock of defeat was past, came to fit, as it were naturally, into the native thought of the Italians. As essentially practical men, they recognised that these victories of the Barbarians over Rome might seem incredible, but must nevertheless be accepted as accomplished facts. To the irresistible logic of force they yielded, almost reconciled to their new position when they found at last this victorious force gathered in the single supreme person of Charles; how much more when, in flattering homage to their mighty past, he assumed the titles of Patricius Romanus and Imperator? And then their thought, appeased by the promise of a civil hierarchy, welcomed, if it did not actually promote, the development of subordinate rank and order in which the Carlovingian Crown had its issue. As the successors of Charlemagne lost power the feudal system rose and flourished. At last it came about that Christendom was divided between the Church and the Empire; the Emperor ranking with the Pope, and his feudatories, from the greatest to the humblest vassal, corresponding with each like order of clergy in the spiritual hierarchy. Such was the general European state at the close of the first Christian millennium.

As these twin powers of Church and Empire covered very much

the same ground, the question of their relation to each other became of the first importance. Nor was this a merely theoretical matter. In the eleventh century the twin powers were in actual conflict on the question of the Investitures, and all Europe took sides in the war; the two parties assuming, ere long, the distinctive names of Guelph and Ghibelline as they supported the Church or the Empire respectively. These are the names and these the causes with which we have already become familiar at Florence, and it cannot therefore be considered idle that we should now ask how this whole situation presented itself to the Italian mind of the day, and how it was shaped in Italy by the ways of thinking current there.

We have seen enough already of mediæval thought under Latin leading to know that a solution of the great problem which might seem natural, if not easy, and which has actually been proposed in our own day and race,[1] was then, and on Italian soil, beyond the reach of thought, and therefore impossible. This solution depends on a clear apprehension of the civil and the ecclesiastical as distinct powers in the land; the one concerned with the material and the other with the spiritual side of life. It then proceeds to affirm that conflict between the two is therefore unnecessary, and should be avoided by the recognition of each as supreme in its own sphere, and free therefore from the interference of the other. The relation between Church and State thus conceived avoids the pitfalls alike of Hildebrandism, for it refuses to subject the State to the Church, and of Erastianism, for neither will it allow the State supremacy save in civil matters. It thus solves the difficulty, as we have said, by proclaiming a doctrine of independent coördinate jurisdiction between the two contrasted powers.

Such a theory and solution, however, were quite impossible in mediæval Italy for the sufficient reason, to begin with, that the view on which they rest is one to which Italian eyes were natively and necessarily blind. For, first, there was not in fact that clear separa-

[1] The solution in question is that brought to the relations of Church and State in Scotland by Chalmers and the Disruption party of 1843; and professed and applied since then by their successors in the Free and the United Churches.

tion between things civil and sacred which might have prompted such a line of thought. The Church which Italy knew wore the aspect of the world; it was in fact the national as distinguished from the Imperial State: its head declaring himself the legitimate heir of Constantine, Charlemagne and Matilda; its numerous clergy exercising civil jurisdiction of greater or less extent; its Canons corresponding, chapter by chapter, to the Code of the Civil Law; its whole corporation organised on that of the Empire. And, correspondingly, the Empire itself had assumed a quasi-sacred character which rendered this confusion of ideas still more inevitable. Was it not founded, even as the Church, on the Divine Will; and had not Pope Leo arrayed Charles at Rome in Stole and Dalmatic—his own vestments—thus giving the Emperor an ecclesiastical character? Thus, possibly as early as the times of Conrad II, and certainly in those of Barbarossa, the whole is styled the *Holy Roman Empire:* a use which Frederic II did much to enforce and extend. To the Emperor belonged the duty of summoning ecclesiastical Councils, and, as we have elsewhere remarked, the Empire was but the Church in another and closely related mode of manifestation. Little wonder then that men failed in these days to gain any clear view of the spiritual as distinguished from the secular power, for such a distinction was then in fact invisible.

But here it occurs to us to remember that a difficulty stood in the way even deeper and more original. The Italian mind, we have already said, was essentially material; indisposed therefore to draw the needed distinction, or to conceive of that which, being a power, and a power on earth, should yet be spiritual enough to find and keep its own place without partaking of the secular and the temporal. Nay, is it not evident that to this radical inability of thought must be traced much at least of the actual and practical confusion which we have found in the being and working of Church and Empire alike? It was thus, through this outward and world-wide realisation of itself in these twin powers, that Italian thought led the world indeed, but led it in the chains of its own limitations; and so deferred the day of that clearer

distinction between civil and sacred things which has done, and is doing, so much to shape the order of the modern world.

If, to the materialism of the Italian mind, be added its speculative realism, we have the last element needed to reconstitute the whole situation from its mental side. The *genus* really exists in each individual of the class, it was held ; but more fully in some, and therefore expectation always waited the appearance of the supreme head in which the class should be fully realised and represented : such was the promise of the philosophic hierarchy. If then the thought of the day but imperfectly, or not at all, distinguished the secular from the sacred ; confusing both under the one notion of power, how inevitable that the daily question should ask which of the two supremely powerful individuals, Pope or Emperor, was really superior to the other as possessing in greater fulness the *generic* quality of power that was evidently common to both. This, as a speculative question only, might have employed the schools for ages and done little harm ; but to restrain thought in its active issues is impossible, and the dispute became *real* indeed, dividing Italy and Europe into partisans of Church and Empire respectively, who carried their quarrel into the street and market-place, and sought to resolve it on the battlefield by force of arms, and at the price of blood and death.

Let us look at this strife of parties more nearly and exactly. The limitations of Italian thought necessarily confused the secular and the sacred under one common notion of power ; its tendencies raised the question of supremacy between Church and State without, observe, supplying any theoretical solution which might be trusted to commend itself to every Italian mind. Thus men were left to seek an answer in the region of the practical, and resolve the difficulty of the times by force of arms. It is no wayward play of fancy which leads us to see in these wars the greatest *duel* ever fought. For what is the duel? In its more serious and ancient form it was a kind of ordeal : an appeal to God by wager of battle to decide some doubtful cause. And even to-day, when the duel has become trivial, it is still defended as the refuge of those who, feeling themselves the subject of deadly wrong, know

that no court of law will take cognizance of their cause or settle the dispute between them and their opponents. But this was just the case of Church and Empire as viewed by their mediæval supporters. Logic, acting on the data supplied by the mediæval mind, had raised a question which it was impotent to resolve. Hence the appeal to Heaven, through the wager of world-wide battle, in the confidence that God would surely defend the right.

Logic could not decide the question, nor, we may add, could the general habit of the Italian mind, as we have seen it, determine on which side of the great conflict Italy should cast her force. The limitations of their thought, while engaging men to view Church and State as opposing powers of the same kind, and denying any logical solution of the difficulty, left them, when the sword lay on the knot, absolutely free to choose their party: they might be Guelphs or Ghibellines at will, yet none the less Italian, or true to the mental tradition of their race. And every one knows how fully the historic facts bear out this theoretic analysis of the situation. For Italy was indeed divided, province against province, town against town, in this cause; the conflict set family over against family; ran like a fever in the veins from generation to generation, and the particular policy, which distinguished even members of the same house from each other, had no foundation in theoretic reason but was dictated by mere individual interest, and fomented by the passion which made a man's foes oftentimes to be those of his own house. This is the sombre background from which the gala dress of Buondelmonte, white slashed with fatal red, so distinctly and characteristically detaches itself.

Such a return of thought to Florence may well lead us to ask what part the city took in the general strife. We have seen enough to suppose that the policy of a city, no less than that of its families and their members, would be determined rather by occasion and convenience than by any logical process of thought. Of this partisanship Florence furnishes a notable example. Her commanding interest lay in her commerce, and therefore in the ways, of river or of road, by which imports reached her markets and exports were sent abroad. These must be kept free from the exaction of

tolls and imposts, or that which was the life of the city would be crushed. But such tolls were the right to which the Ghibellines—whose name we might spell *gabellani* as far as Florence was concerned—represented by the *castellani* of the Contado, laid claim as their just dues. Hence the first wars of the city to set her communications free, and hence her fundamental aversion from the party of the Empire; dictated not by any political theory, but by the simple logic of supreme self-interest. Thus, once more, and from the very first, the Substance of Florence in her commerce is seen to be closely related to that which came to be her informing Spirit; very much as the body is related to its indwelling soul.

We are yet some way however from a clear view of that soul and spirit in themselves, which were hardly less distinct from the Guelphism to which Florence might seem thus committed, than from the party of the Empire which her first wars attacked. Meanwhile it may be well to remark that the opportunism we have noticed furnishes the chief explanation of what is most perplexing in Florentine history; its constant habit of change. Had the city followed the *lumen siccum* of pure reason in these early antagonisms and antipathies, we must needs have accused her people of instability, seeing how, as time went on, she swore allegiance to each of the great parties in turn, and submitted to the Empire in one generation, only to serve the Church in the next. But, remembering that not theory but interest—the advantage of the moment—dictated the civic policy, we begin to see that a deep consistency may, after all, underlie this superficial mutability. The spectacle Florence presents is like that offered by a skilful master of fence, whose blade is never still as it flickers about his adversary; while yet all his lightning changes of pose and point are ruled by the single desire of defence, and who attacks in *tierce* or *carte* indifferently as he perceives a corresponding advantage. It is the inconsistence of utter consistency.

The long wars of Guelph and Ghibelline, of Church and Empire, were far from being an unmixed evil in Italy. The two great parties into which Christendom was divided offered, nay imposed, a choice between them; bringing with it a necessity which came

near to every community, we might almost say to every individual. The choice was free, and, when thus made, became the means whereby the cities realised their freedom, and wherein the individual asserted himself. Thus it made strongly for that singular development of *character* which distinguished Italian communities, families and even persons. In this new view it mattered not that a city was by choice Guelph or Ghibelline; such a tie of mere partisanship was superficial, therefore changeable at will. What was important in supreme degree was the freedom to choose; nay, the act of choice itself, whereby that freedom was affirmed. For thus, in the very moment of their alliance with one or other form of the world-power, Church or Empire, the cities protested against the tyranny of both, proclaiming themselves the true centre of Government, and in fact holding the germ of the modern world.

That this healthy individualism was at the heart of Florentine life is quite obvious; it appears even under the slight mask of her adhesion to the party of the Guelphs, which she early joined, and to which she constantly returned. Her commercial interests were not the only reason of her opposition to the Empire; she looked farther than road or river, took account of the choice and policy of neighbouring cities, framing her own in sharp and, we must believe, intentional distinction to theirs. That Florence was Guelph depended in no small degree on the already declared Ghibellinism of Pistoia, Pisa, and Siena, and she reacted on them as they acted on her, to the development of an intense and intensely local patriotism. Yet who does not see that in all this fervour what really burned was not the passion for either Church or Empire as such, but a new Spirit, which presently should overthrow and survive them both. Here then we touch the heart of the whole matter in that profitable individualism, which, all along, was the more or less clearly conceived ideal of the Florentine, as it is of the modern, State.

The moment of this new birth is epoch-making; let us, ere we leave it, consider the Spirit of Florence as the fulfilment of a distant and mighty past. Christianity had brought Italy the ideal of a *City*, heavenly in its full and final form, yet to be realised on earth

as well as soon as the twin forces of the Classic world should combine to this great end; the Greek idealism finding its realisation through the Roman practical sense and political experience. The Church should have led here as the natural custodian of the Holy Vision given from Heaven to inspire her progress. But the Church is unequal to the task; grasps at power and worldly consequence in a selfish spirit, permitting these to dull and obscure her dream. Behold, then, the Empire arise to contend with her on the very ground she has so unwisely chosen. The world might have been spared such unseemly strife, you say, had the Church kept her first purity, and been content to fulfil her true office of drawing inspiration for the world from the spiritual sphere. As it was, however, the conflict was inevitable and even fatal, yet not in the sense of death, but of new life and hope. For lo! out of the shock of arms, and from the war of contending powers, comes something new and wonderful, whose features we seem to recognise as the dust of that great battle clears away. It is the *City* that emerges; the old dream in a fresh realisation and with a further hope, and wonder increases as we trace the movement that thus unfolds itself. For what we see is that those very limitations of the Italian mind which threatened to bury the ideal Greece and the East had brought under a weight of worldliness that well-nigh crushed the Church, became, when that traditional thought was applied to the problem of the day as between Church and Empire, the means of recapturing the vanishing ideal, and making it powerful again on the lines, not of ecclesiastical, but of civic life and progress. If the blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church, it is hardly less true that what was shed at the Ponte Vecchio, and on many another spot during the long strife of Guelph and Ghibelline, brought the baptism of the civic Spirit just born, and thus opened, for Florence especially, a new age of real and even ideal progress.

CHAPTER III

SAN GIOVANNI AND THE PATARENES

AT last we come to the heart of Florence indeed. What the *umbilicus Romæ* was to the greater city by the Tiber, that, and much more, was San Giovanni to Florence; not merely a sentimental centre, but the actual rallying-point of her civic and religious life for a thousand years, during the greater part of which Church and State were as nearly as possible one; the varying forms of a single persistent activity. The old state of things survives yet in the fact that to this day every Florentine must be baptised here, in the single font that Rome fills and blesses within the city bounds.

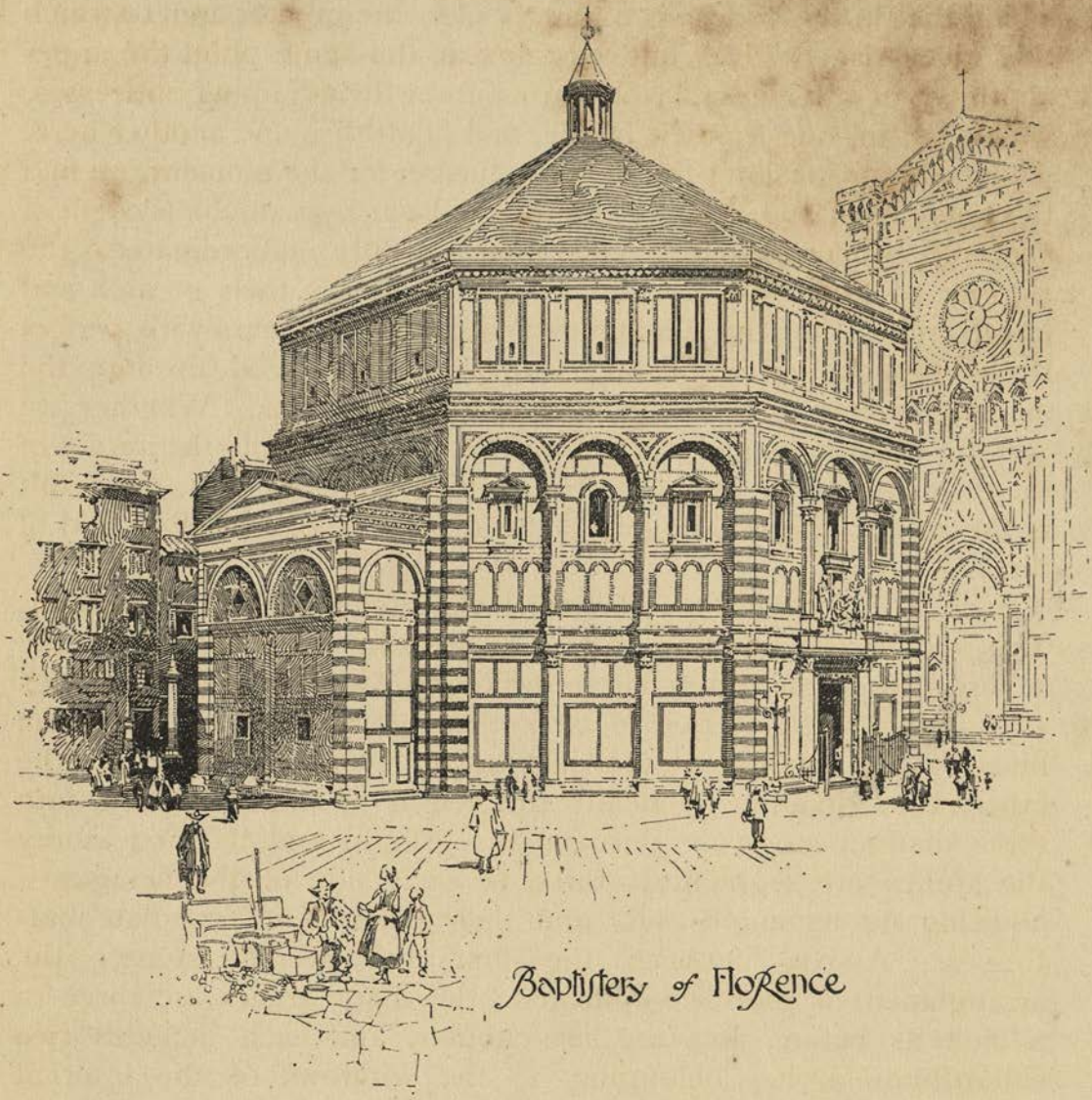
Already (p. 208) we have been drawn to study the decorative system of this Church in its origin, nature, and developments. Of what is merely external here, there is thus no further reason to speak; and indeed the structure of this remarkable building is sufficiently curious and important to engage our whole attention. To the analysis of that intimate structure we now accordingly turn.

The plan of San Giovanni is a polygon of eight sides, not perfectly equal to each other. Each angle of this octagon is occupied by a very massive masonry pier, and from the inner faces of these piers spring great pointed arches, four in number, connecting each pier with its diagonal opposite through the stone ring at the base of the central lantern. The space between each pier and its adjoining neighbour—each side of the octagon in fact—is divided into three parts by two intermediate buttresses, of equal height with the angle piers, but more slightly built than they. These buttresses throw short arches inwards in the strict line of their own depth, so that these meet and rest upon the greater arches that rise

from the angle piers at a point about two-thirds of their whole spring to the lantern. The result of such an arrangement is, of course, that, taking any series of three adjoining supports, of which that in the middle is an angle pier, the greater arch to which this gives rise receives and sustains at the same point the upper abutment of two slighter ribs thrown from the adjoining buttresses, which fall in, one from each side, and neutralise one another here. Thus, without pushing the analysis further for the moment, we find the octagon of the ground plan marked out by a double system of vertical supports—eight and sixteen—duly subordinated, the slighter to the stronger, and so tied above by their greater and lesser arches that the fundamental octagon reappears with perfect truth, though in diminished proportion, if traced through the meeting points of their stronger and slighter ribs. Whether we add the eight piers and sixteen buttresses, or multiply the angles of the ground plan by the spaces into which each side falls, the result is the same; the building is planned on a system of eight and of three.

Such, then, is what may be called the skeleton of San Giovanni. The rest of the building may now best be described under the subordinate heads of bracing and filling. The piers and buttresses already described are tied to each other by arches which follow the lines of the octagon at two successive levels, the one over the other, thus dividing vertically the height of these supports into three distinct storeys. Between the ground and the first storey the arches are segmental—three to each side of the octagon—abutting on its angle piers and their pairs of intermediate buttresses. Above, between the first and second storey, the arrangement is more complicated; the main arches are three to a side as before, but are semicircular, and each includes two subordinate arches belonging to the windows of the internal gallery. At the roof level the complexity of this bracing finds its climax, deserving here the most careful description and study.

Above, we have as yet only noticed the arches which spring inwards towards the centre of the octagon from the inner faces of the piers and buttresses. It is now time to say that each of these is

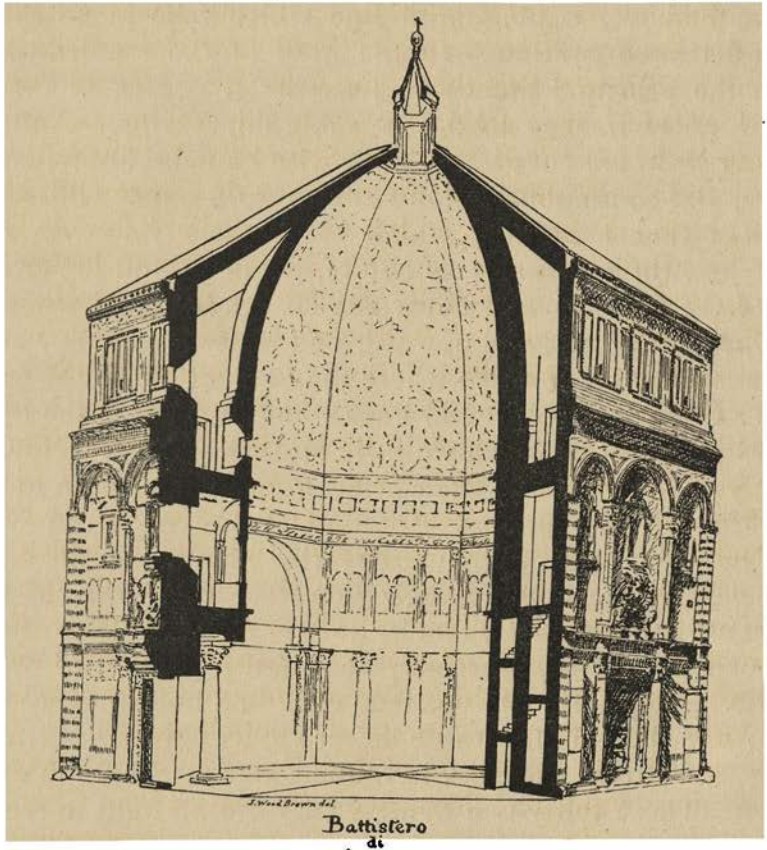


Baptistery of Florence

loaded by masonry built up in the form of a wall on the base of the pier or buttress and the arch that rises from it. These twenty-four loading walls continue the vertical line of the piers and buttresses that support them till they reach two-fifths of the whole height from spring to crown of the great arches. Hence, they follow, inwards and above, a tangential line which falls in to the arch curve, and thence continues to the base of the lantern—if they stand on the principal arches—or, similarly, ceases at the same tangential point if they load the subordinate ribs. And these twenty-four walls are connected, each with its neighbours, not here and there, but continuously along their whole upper edges by the arches of a tunnel vaulting which binds them into one above. These arches, three to a side as before, begin behind the crowning cornice of the Church, and cover the spaces inward between wall and wall, running back and upward, and lessening as they run, till they become a point or a line where the tangent meets the curve of the arch: those very points and lines which determine the invisible octagon in the roof of which we have already spoken. Nay, more intimately still, the same system is even applied, though in diminished form, to the internal structure of the great angle piers themselves. For these, where they rise above the floor of the second gallery, are hollow; their side walls following the lead of the intermediate buttresses, that is, lines at right angles to the sides of the octagon, which, therefore, soon fall in to that of the great angle rib. Yet, ere doing so, they enclose a hollow space behind the rib; and this cell, like those larger spaces between buttress and buttress or buttress and pier, is vaulted above to help in carrying the roof. These thirty-two dying vaults are all built in stone laid *alla Romana*, that is, with the long axis of each stone corresponding to that of the whole vault. They are the support of the visible roof in its lower part, but to say so is to pass from the bracing of the framework to its facing and filling, which demands separate consideration.

In general the filling here consists of a double wall following the lines of the octagon, occupying therefore the spaces between the angle piers and their intermediate buttresses, and answering to

the outer and inner faces of these supports. Being double, it leaves room for two practicable galleries about the building, whose floors rest on the bracing arches of the first and second storey. For the sake of these passages the vertical supports of the building are pierced with doorways at the level of their floors, and the outer



Battistero
di
Firenze.

filling walls have windows which not only light the galleries, but the whole interior, through the open arcade of the first storey and the squares at the base of the cupola. Coming to the details of this filling, we observe that the outer face of the basement is a plain wall set a little back, so that the structural angle piers and intermediate buttresses detach themselves visibly, though slightly,

from its surface. On three sides the space between the buttresses is occupied by the doors. Within, the inner basement wall is reduced to a series of columns and pilasters, the former free, and set so as to represent the inner face of the buttresses, the latter carved on the inside of the great angle piers. On the first storey, the outer wall, in its lower part, is set to the level of that which encloses the basement, so that piers and buttresses detach themselves here as below. But these supports are connected above by a shallow arcade, three arches to each side of the octagon, and over these arches the wall face comes forward to the full reach of their projection. Within, the inner wall of this storey fills the deep and true bracing arches with a charming arcade of double windows divided by slender marble shafts. The external facing of the second storey is a simple wall divided by the projection of the angle piers and intermediate buttresses, between which it rises to the final cornice. The inner filling, on the other hand, attains here its chief importance and interest. Following the lead of the great arches and subordinate buttress ribs, whose loading walls spring from the floor of the second gallery, it curves gently inwards from all sides to the centre of the octagon, contracting as it rises, and thus shapes the inner roof of the church, which is not a true dome, observe, but rather an eight-sided vault, proclaimed such by its structure and filling as well as by its shape. Nor is the outer roof simple, supported as it is in greater part by another and still more complicated vaulting system; together the two, outer and inner, form the first great example of a double dome.

To complete our description of the Church in an important particular, we must notice the distinctive peculiarity of the Chancel wall. Between its angle piers a great arch opens, carrying on its crown the filling of this section of the inner cupola. These piers have therefore a double duty here, their own and that of the absent buttresses, these last represented, however, by the abutting walls of the chancel. Originally the Chancel, as we know from the excavations of 1895, was a semicircular apse, which must have carried its due dome in the shape of a quarter sphere to help the great bracing arch, and, through it, the cupola above. The first

gallery of the Church is continued here only by virtue of a double stair which carries its passage over the crown of the chancel arch. To make room for this the whole disposition of the filling walls is altered, the inner of these being here doubled in thickness, and the outer reduced to one-half or less. That the builders felt free to play with these proportions as suited their convenience, shows that we have been right in seeking the substantial structure of San Giovanni in its vertical supports and bracing arches, rather than in these facing and filling walls, which might indeed be completely removed without affecting the stability of the rest. Curtain walls we may call them, hung about this Tabernacle from the wrought rods of its cornices; or scenery set and decorated in the horizontal style of an age that was ready to pass away. Ring up the curtain then, bid the stage stand free, and what do we find? The vertical, not the horizontal; pillars of masonry pierced like girders set on end, eight of them more or less tubular, and all braced about the octagon by a double system of arches; arches, first timidly segmental, that hide themselves behind architraves, then displaying the full form of the semicircle, and at last sweeping from point to point of the octagon across its whole diameter in that soaring shape which the Gothic style has made its own. The true though hidden architecture of San Giovanni is cellular not solid, vertical not horizontal. It is the architecture of economy, balance, and careful calculation of opposing thrusts; the rest mere drapery drawn about the place for fashion's sake that followed the custom of the time.

But what time then? As yet we have said nothing of the age of this building, though our description, by revealing alike the structural unity and remarkable character of San Giovanni, at once assures us it must have been in all essentials the work of a single age, and highly excites our curiosity as to the actual time when it may have been erected. Fortunately the position this Church has long held as, if not the earliest, at least the most important in Florence, does not a little to simplify the inquiry we now attempt, by giving weight to arguments from silence which, in the case of a building less central and notable, we might have hesitated to

press. This premised, let us see what can be made of so interesting a problem.

It is to be supposed that no one will venture to assert that San Giovanni dates from the fifteenth century, though, were we to restrict our judgment to the ground of mere style, such a hypothesis might be defended much more easily than some others that have been hazarded; considering the technical ability and classic tendencies of the Renaissance. It is quite as certain that the fourteenth century—the age of the adjacent Cathedral—could never have given birth to the Baptistery; besides, Villani, who wrote in the opening years of that century, speaks of it as of hoary antiquity even then. Nor is it necessary farther to pass the ages in strict review. The earliest Florentine documents, belonging to the ninth, and even to the eighth, century speak already of San Giovanni as the See. It is impossible to suppose that so important a Church could have been even rebuilt in later times without evidence of such reconstruction appearing in the documents or the chronicles compiled from them, and we are therefore assured that San Giovanni is at least as old as Carlovingian times.

What is to be said of the period we have now reached; was this Church built between the time of the Barbarian inroads and that of Charlemagne? Two sufficient reasons forbid our supposing it. Take first the matter of style, which should have a very definite meaning for us, now that we have studied the remarkable structure of San Giovanni in all its main particulars. Italy, let it be remembered, is not without examples of Churches built in the Carlovingian age, which may fairly be compared with this. Such, for instance, are the Baptisteries of Agliata and Biella. The latter dates from the first half of the eighth century, is domed, with a central lantern rising from a sloping roof, but shows nothing of the structure, as distinguished from the appearance of San Giovanni; for its roof is simply the slope given to the outside of the vaulting mass; the containing walls are solid throughout, and the principle of its construction lies therefore in the rude resistance of solid masonry, rather than in the concentration of forces and

their successive extinction the one by the other as in the finer, the Florentine building.

It may be objected that we have only to fall further back and we shall find, within our period and in Italy, a Church which fairly stands comparison with the Baptistery of Florence. The sixth century saw the building of San Vitale at Ravenna, and indeed this Church, planned on the octagon, with an apsidal Chancel, offers many points of correspondence with San Giovanni. Most important of all, its masses are distributed on a system of vertical supports, and its arch thrusts gathered where they meet the resistance of buttresses, so that here too the static principle is that of balance and not of mere mass, as at Biella. But while the structure of San Giovanni might well belong to the sixth century, as the example of San Vitale assures us, historical reasons forbid our assigning it to that age. For this was the time (A.D. 536) when Witigis and his host were at the gates; a time of war and not of peace, or of peaceful building. Six years later Totila came and Florence fell, not to rise again for many a day. The condition of the city, waste and forsaken of her inhabitants, who but slowly returned and timidly re-formed their state, assures us that, from the time of the Barbarian onset down to the days of Charlemagne at least, Florence could not have thought of such a building as her Baptistery. And when her new prosperity began to dawn, it was already too late, for then men built as we have seen them do at Biella, and not in the subtle style of San Vitale at Ravenna or San Giovanni of Florence.

Thus, then, only two epochs of architecture remain to be considered, the Classic Roman and the early Christian. As to the former it is put out of the question, partly by the general consideration that the Romans depended for statics on massive rather than balanced and grouped resistances, and, still more convincingly, by a comparison between, say, the Pantheon and the Baptistery of Florence. Had the latter building been, as some have supposed it once was, a pagan temple, its plan would not have shown the octagon but the full circle like that of the Pantheon, its vault would have been a solid dome, not a double

cupola, with weight cast about its base in uninterrupted rings instead of being gathered on radial lines that rest on the chief constructive members. The very resemblance between the one building and the other, when read in connection with these essential differences, shows the true relation between them. The Baptistery is a lesser, lighter Pantheon, developed from that model under the power of a new architectural idea, and it belongs, therefore, not to the Classic age, but to that which succeeded it.

Thus the problem is considerably narrowed. The fourth century A.D. saw the beginnings of the new Architecture, when Christian Churches and Baptisteries began to rise in sympathy with the rising spirit of those who found their Faith now publicly acknowledged and allowed. Between A.D. 350 and 536 Florence must have built her San Giovanni; earlier she dared not, later she could not. Can we still further limit, if not the possibilities, at least the probabilities of the case? On the side of antiquity at any rate we have a date—A.D. 406—before which it is highly unlikely that the Baptistery could have been built. Up till that time the limited resources of the Christians in Florence would hardly, we may suppose, have led them to think of adding another Church to those already built—that of the Maccabees at Santa Felicità, San Lorenzo fuori le mura, and, probably, Santa Reparata—which must have amply sufficed for their accommodation. But with the victory of Stilicho all was suddenly changed. Christianity then became the fashion, crowds came to profess their new Faith, and, in a moment, that which had hitherto been superfluous became almost a necessity. This, it is reasonable to suppose, was the time when the building of the Baptistery began at least to be thought of.

On the nearer side we find less certainty possible, when we try to push back the building of this Church behind the year 536. Were it proved, indeed, that the dedication here had been changed, and that what we now know as San Giovanni was originally the Church of San Salvatore, as Despotti Mospignotti thinks,[1] the

[1] A. Nardini Mospignotti, *Il Duomo di San Giovanni*, Firenze, 1902. This work is of great interest and value. I have used it freely, though independently, in this chapter, and while thus owning my debt to its pages, would direct thither all readers who wish further information with regard to the details of this remarkable building.

way would be clear. For the ancient lives of San Zanobi tell us that the saint was buried in San Lorenzo, and that, five years later, his body was transferred to San Salvatore; evidently because, in the meantime, the latter had risen to take the place of the former as the principal Church of Florence. But the best authorities give us A.D. 440 as the date of San Zanobi's death, and 445 therefore as that of this translation, which, if San Salvatore was the earlier title of San Giovanni, would also mark the completion of this Church, whose building would fall somewhere in the forty years between 406 and 445.

From this somewhat minute and uncertain antiquarianism we may well pass to grasp again the larger lines of architectural story, and to note how well the idea that San Giovanni was built in the first half of the fifth century A.D. agrees with, and illuminates its undoubted relation to other important buildings whose dates are known, and which belong to the same line of constructive development. These are, first, the Pantheon, and the so-called Temple of Minerva Medica at Rome; and then San Lorenzo of Milan and San Vitale at Ravenna. They form a series, not only successive chronologically, but marking a distinct line of architectural development; and with this series San Giovanni of Florence is connected as its most remarkable offshoot.

The Pantheon, which used to be thought a building of Agrippa's time (A.U.C. 729), has rather been assigned to the second century of the Christian Era, and the last researches, by bringing to light, from different parts of the structure, bricks bearing the stamp of Hadrian's empire, have made the matter a certainty. Even more important for us are the results of these researches in establishing the fact that, while the larger statics of the Rotonda are, as we have already said, those of simple mass and weight, indications are not wanting to show that the dome is formed on an internal arch-system fitted to gather its forces on fixed lines and bring them to rest at certain points. This being established, the Pantheon appears as the earliest known example of the new architectural manner.

The Minerva Medica, probably the hall of some lost thermæ,

not only follows in chronological sequence—its date is generally given as A.D. 260—but shows marked constructive advance on the very line we are studying. The plan here is internally circular, externally polygonal. The masses of support are not uniformly distributed, as in the Pantheon, but gathered about the ten points of coincidence falling between the niches from which decagon and circle alike result. The cupola rests on this system of apses in such a balance of weight and force as to suggest the *chevet* of a French Cathedral. Already the new style had gone far on the way to perfection.

San Lorenzo of Milan may have been, like the Minerva Medica, a bathing hall, but, even if built from the first as a Christian Church, must be ascribed to a period not later than the fourth century A.D. Here the development is distinctly vertical, and at the same time horizontal. The apse system, introduced in the Minerva Medica, stands in San Lorenzo surrounded by an including ambulatory, and the whole, as it rises to carry the dome, is contrived to afford room for a gallery on the first storey in guise of a triforium, and yet another above that at the clear-storey level. The development of this architectural *motif* is here complete, alike in composition and construction, and San Vitale of Ravenna is evidently but a sixth-century treatment of the same theme with Byzantine modifications, especially in decoration. These indeed add richness to the Church by the Adriatic without, however, enabling it to reach the solemn grandeur already attained at Milan, and early celebrated in the Rhythm of that city (A.D. 725), and the page of Arnulphus (A.D. 1095).

With such details in view, we may venture to determine the place held by the Baptistery of Florence in the singular series of buildings to which it belongs. Unlike San Lorenzo, it has not developed the niche; employing it only for liturgical reasons in the apse which occupied originally one of the sides, or rather attached itself there as an adjunct to the main building. From this point of view, then, San Giovanni stands nearer to the Pantheon in the order of development. On the other hand, its polygonal plan, the doubling of the filling walls, and the super-

posed galleries, one above the other, for which these leave room—not to speak of the cunning statical system by which it stands—differentiate it sufficiently from the Rotonda of Rome, and incline us to regard it as a variant on the model furnished by Milan; while the triumphant subtlety and solidity of its twin roof and vaulting construction make the Florentine building unique even among its splendid kin. The framing of a building on main lines of force and resistance so as to make what may be called its skeleton independent of the curtain walls employed to fill its spaces; the adaptation of this advanced cellular construction even to a great eight-sided covering vault and superior roof—that this could be done in Florence as early as the fifth century, shows what a fair promise and progress the coming of the Barbarians interrupted. The far later triumphs of the Romanesque and even of the Gothic schools were plainly in no small part but the reöccupation of ground that had been already firmly held, centuries before, by the nameless builders of this neoclassic architecture.

If such a monument could find memory and voice, of how much it might speak to us: forgotten occasions and assemblies, moments of the first importance in Florentine history, of which we may be sure it has ever been the rallying-point and material centre. One of these assemblies, at least, emerges from the shadows to claim our notice; for in it we shall find Guelph and Ghibelline, Church and Empire, in a new degree of organisation, and therefore exercising a new and more powerful influence on the development of that Florentine Spirit which their strife had called into being.

The year is that of 1245, when Florence lives under the forms of Ghibelline government. The Podestà is Pace Pesamigola da Bergamo, a nominee of Frederic II, and a strong supporter of the Imperial party; as appears from the changed formula which precedes his official signature—"Dei et Imperatoris gratiâ Florentinus Potestas" it runs, instead of the simpler "Dei gratiâ" of former times. For this was a moment when the Empire put out all its force, and made its power widely and deeply felt. Count Pandolfo da Fasanella sat near by at San Miniato al Tedesco as Imperial Legate for Tuscany; and his was a strong hand, wielding a com-

plete organisation; hence the submission of Florence, whose policy was guided by a skilful opportunism, and who feared to injure her essential interests by untimely revolt.

To suppose, however, that the city had become, even in appearance, entirely Ghibelline would be a mistake; the opposition was still on foot, ready to secure all those advantages which we have seen as the natural result of such a balance between the contending powers. The people, with not a few of the nobility, leaned still to the party of the Church; sustaining against the Podestà the persons of Jacopo Alberti and Gerardo Guidi whom they had elected their Capitani a year before. And if the *milites* in major part were at the call of the Empire, the *pedites* were still on foot and under arms to obey the commands of these Captains. Given a little encouragement from Rome as the plausible pretext for a popular rising, and all was ready for a conflict such as Florence, for all her family quarrels and desultory street fighting, had never seen.

The needed encouragement was already at work, supplied, since 1243, by the eloquent voice of Peter of Verona preaching against the Patarenes. These were heretics professing strange but ancient doctrines, the inheritance they had received from a long and obscure succession of Gnostics in the Apostolic age, and Manichæans, Paulicians, and Bulgarians in those which followed. Spreading in Italy from a centre at Milan, where the *Pataria*, or rag-fair, is said to have given them their name, the Patarenes are heard of in Tuscany early in the twelfth century, and, a hundred years later, at the time of which we now speak, a reason we reserve joined them closely to the party of the Empire. This is their claim to present notice, rather than the peculiarities of their belief, which, resting on a foundation of Oriental Dualism, asserted the inherent evil of matter, and taught that the body was a prison for the punishment of pre-natal sins; that there was no Resurrection; that marriage was culpable, flesh forbidden as food, and the Body of Christ absent from the Altar for the reason, to them sufficient, that it had never existed save in appearance (Docetism), and therefore offered no substance to be changed into those of bread and wine. To deal with this heresy the Inquisition was

first established in Florence, where it had its seat with the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella; and to engage the popular interest on the side of the Church came Peter of Verona, himself a converted Patarene of Lombardy, and now the eloquent preacher of Orthodoxy. We have already hinted at a state of affairs which shows that the Guelph policy had at least as much to do with both sermons and Crusade as any zeal for the preservation of the Christian Faith in its purity.

And, if encouragement was already given from the pulpit of Santa Maria Novella, the pretext for an appeal to arms was not long in making its appearance. Two Florentine nobles, the brothers Pace and Barone di Barone, had been accused before the Inquisition of harbouring in their towers Burnetto and Torsello, the two Patarene Bishops, and of favouring in other ways the existence and spread of the sect. They were condemned to pay a fine of a thousand lire, against which sentence they took an appeal, significantly enough, to the Court of the Emperor. This was in 1245, in the spring of which year the great conflict had assumed a new and acuter form, when the Council of Lyons openly excommunicated Frederic II. At the same time the Inquisition obtained an injunction from the Pope requiring the Capitani of Florence to lend the secular arm for the due execution of its sentences; to which Frederic replied by warning the Capitani not to infringe on the privileges of the Podestà. Already matters were serious enough; the critical moment drew still nearer when, on August 12th, Pace Pesamigola sent an order requiring the Inquisition to cancel its sentence and repay the fine laid on the Baroni on pain of summons to answer in his Court for what had been done contrary to the Imperial command. A great crowd—note its presence and meaning—witnessed the reply; which took the form of a corresponding citation requiring the Podestà to appear before the Inquisitors as a heretic and favourer of heresy. Matters were now plainly gathered in such a knot as only the sword could unloose.

The first active step was taken by the clergy and the popular party. It was the 24th of August—an earlier St. Bartholomew's Day

—thus made of fatal omen in Florence long ere France chose to double its horrors. The Bishop had gathered the faithful, as on an occasion of great and general moment, in San Giovanni "to hear from the pulpit," their own account of the matter says, "what was to be alleged against the Podestà, who, more than once, had opposed the orders of Rome in favour of the heretics." When, lo! "heaping crimes upon crimes, with armed hand, appealing to the Podestà for help," the Imperialists "calling in their exiles, ringing the bell of the Commune, riding on harnessed horses, with arbalests, bows and arrows, hindered us openly by fighting against us and our Holy Host that the Pope had blessed and received; brake into the Cathedral yard, wounding and killing the faithful; yea, entered the Church itself in arms, spoiling and wounding those assembled at sermon." We quote from a deed drawn up the same day "in presence of a faithful crowd in arms, come to fight against the heretics," of which faithful, tradition tells that they waged this war in Florence for two days of blood, defeating the party of the Podestà, first in the city itself and on the morrow in the suburb of Oltr' Arno, till their victory was complete. But their first measures had been taken in San Giovanni, and it was from thence, when once they had recovered the *coup de main* directed against them, that the Guelphs went forth conquering and to conquer. Hardly can even this Church have seen a more critical moment, or been the centre and rallying-point of a revolt more full of consequence. What that consequence was we must now try to see.

Let us return for a little to the Patarenes. That sect owed its popularity in Italy, not at all to the doubtful and exotic doctrines it taught, but to the influence it gained by appealing, through its undoubted practice of evangelical poverty, to a widespread sentiment of the day, directed against the worldliness and corruption of the orthodox clergy. This sentiment was specially strong among the upper classes and hereditary nobility, who saw their rights infringed and their position menaced wherever priests grasped at temporal power and dignity. Hence the success of the Patarenes among men of rank, and hence also, as these formed the strength of the

Ghibelline party, a peculiar association, not otherwise natural, yet ever growing nearer, between this sect and the general Imperial interest.

The situation, as thus developed, presents the opposition and conflict of the two great world-powers in a new and striking phase. On the one hand the Church, instead of confining its energies and ambitions to the spiritual, its proper sphere, invades the province of civil government and assumes the form of a great secular power. At this point its error gives occasion and encouragement to the Patarene protest which proclaimed the necessity of a return to primitive spirituality. And, from the other pole, the Empire, where that protest found instant echo, associates Patarene sectarianism with itself, uses for its own purposes the organisation of the heretics, and so far assumes the form of a doubtful and dissident spirituality—an error that plainly marches, *pari passu,* with the initial mistake committed by the Church. Thus all parties are in the wrong: the Church first of all, because it has meddled with the province of the civil magistrate; the Empire because it has answered by invading the spiritual sphere; the Patarenes themselves because they confused their natural and legitimate protest against the secularisation of things spiritual with teaching that surely and widely departed from the truth.

The point to be insisted on here, however, is undoubtedly the new character thus given to the age-long strife of parties in Italy. Between Church and Empire there is evidently less to choose than ever. The Church had long claimed right to a temporal kingdom; the Empire now replies by carrying the war into the spiritual province. Ultimately the Church bid men look back to the primacy of Peter, and taught the world, in a legend, how that favoured Apostle had been the first Bishop of Rome, the founder of her existing hierarchy. In like manner the Empire spoke of Charlemagne, and the Ghibellines of Florence destroyed their city utterly, in a Carlovingian romance, that they might hail the great Paladin as its rebuilder. Thus move is met by countermove, legend begets legend, and appeal answers to appeal from these opposing camps at the bidding of a strife in which the two hosts

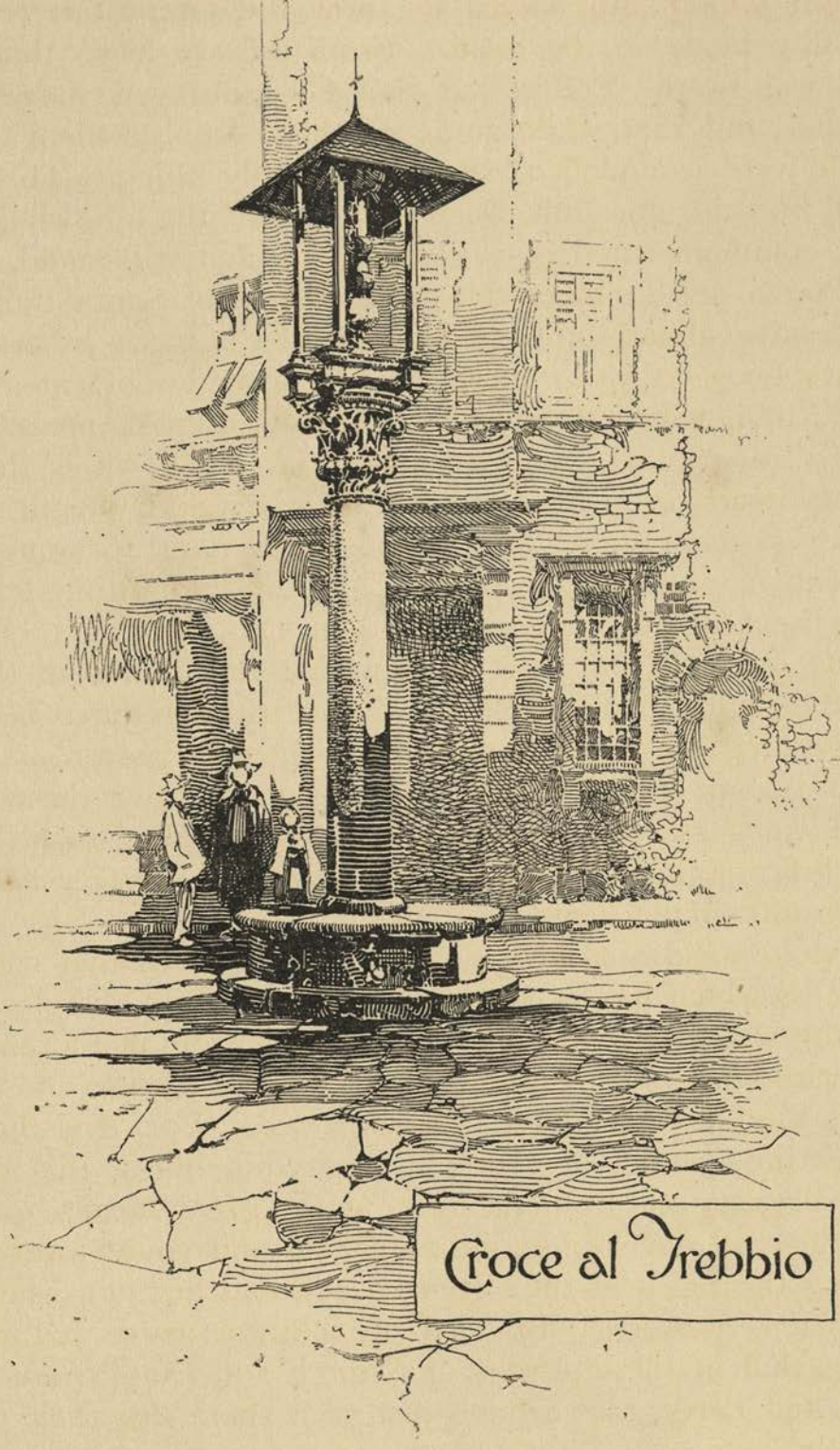
had long faced each other, but were never so exactly matched as now. The local aspect of this exactitude is well seen in the strictly corresponding orders issued by the Podestà and chief Inquisitor of Florence, each requiring the other to answer in his court.

Yet, as we know, in the last resort, the conflict was fought out, not with words but with cold steel. And it is in the region of force and of arms that we find the very *acies,* the battle-keen edge, sharpened, steel against steel, as it had never been before. The Podestà, head of the Ghibellines in Florence, has the *milites* of city and neighbouring country at his command; the Capitani, leaders of the Guelphs, call out the *pedites* to resist the Imperial cavalry, and so the proud challenge of the nobles is met by a people in arms. Tradition has it that the winning side had created a new body of troops, which Peter of Verona enrolled at Santa Maria Novella for this occasion, calling twelve captains to the command, naming this arm the *Company of the Faithful*, and giving them twelve standards blessed by his own hand where a red cross shone displayed on a white field. Santini points out, however, that the title *Societas Fidei* had been already granted in general by the Pope to any muster of the traditional *pedites* of the Commune, where these assembled to defend the cause and policy of the Church. And so we may take it, for, thus understood, the red cross is a sign of the last and sharpest distinction. Those who gathered under it had chosen their part, and as more than a century before the *pedites* had humbled the castles of the *contado,* so now, in a new heat and at closer quarters, they engage the same enemy as, mounted and harnessed for war, he charges down the streets of Florence.

And the result, what was it? The victory of the Guelphs, who broke the Ghibellines in the city, drove them to new defeat beyond the Arno, and pursued their flying bands to the last stronghold of San Gaggio? But, in truth, the matter is not so plain as tradition would have it, and some scholars have found reason to doubt whether there were a serious conflict at all. For the fundamental document describing the doings of that St. Bartholomew's Day is

drawn by a Guelph pen, and must be corrected by the rough draught which still serves to show the alterations ecclesiastical partiality made in the deed. From this we learn that the force employed by the Podestà at San Giovanni was purposely exaggerated, and that while some of the more turbulent among the people were wounded, none were actually killed. This criticism, it will be said, does not touch the story of the following two days' fight, commemorated by the columns which still stand, the one in the Piazza del Trebbio, the other in that of Santa Felicità. But as we have already noticed (p. 243), the latter is otherwise stated to have been set up to mark the site of an important and ancient grave; and, with regard to the Trebbio, a cross, probably on this site, is mentioned in a document of 1118, while the existing column bears, in correspondence with this hint, the strange words *propter grande mysterium,* supposed to refer to some forgotten incident in the history of the earliest Florentine Christianity. That the Guelphs were victorious in 1245 need not be called in serious question, but it is certain that the details of the conflict and the sudden completeness of the triumph have been greatly exaggerated. Pace Pesamigola remained in power, and even the proud Abbot of the Badia, only a month after these disorders, found it necessary to recognise him by appealing to his court. It is significant, however, that he is now *Dei gratiâ Potestas* in the earlier and simpler form.

If victory did not shine on the Guelphs with that sudden completeness which has been supposed, we are not therefore to think that the sharp edge of this war showed itself in Florence only to pass without serious result. It had its consequence, and that of just such a kind as might have been expected. For, if we have viewed rightly the conflict of Guelphs and Ghibellines, this has shown itself already, and from the first, as the great means, especially in Florence, of developing individualism and so of awakening and forming the Spirit of the City as a new and distinct result of these contrasted powers. But so it follows as a natural consequence that, if these powers of Church and Empire are organised anew, and carry, as we have just seen them do, their opposition



Croce al Trebbio

to a higher plane of development where force meets force not at one point only but all along the line, then, whatever the superficial result may be, whether victory fall to the one party or to the other, and in whatever degree the party triumph be attained, the effect of the whole is sure, and will be seen in a new quickening of the civic life to further and higher issues.

Now this was, in fact, what accompanied and followed in Florence the critical moment of her Patarene war. Santini says of it: "The union formed with the nobles of the Guelph party; the help derived from the Pope; the attack delivered against the heretics were, all of them, means which the policy of the people used to defend its own interests." And, a little before, speaking of the Societas Fidei: "Its scope was to form, as it were, a State within the State; to withdraw, that is, the more intimate political life of the place from direct dependence on the Podestà at a moment when that nominee of the Empire naturally stood for the Ghibelline interest, and sought to win a blind obedience from Florence to the will of Frederic II." Here then we touch the kernel of the whole matter. For this State within the State, what is it but that which we have otherwise described as the *City par excellence?* It is the essential formative Spirit of the place that is here laid bare in its being and action. We see it born of contending forces, shaped by adversity; and that, under a new stress of circumstances, it now develops new force and capacity is not to be doubted. For the proof is at hand, in the present rise and triumph of the *Primo Popolo* as the patent fruit of the Patarene war.

CHAPTER IV

SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE AND THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE

THE subject of our last chapter leads naturally on to that with which we are now to be engaged. The principal feature of Santa Maria del Fiore is, beyond all question, its cupola; and not of Santa Maria del Fiore alone, but of the whole city, which the genius of Brunellesco, aided by a unique opportunity, has thus dignified, making Florence preëminently the city of the Dome. But the dome of Brunellesco is a direct derivative from the earlier Cathedral of Florence. Thus the Church of San Giovanni becomes a model for later architects, and perpetuates itself, not alone in the decorative series we have already studied (p. 208), but rather in this, one of the greatest constructive triumphs of the builder's art.

The well-known story of Vasari tells us that Brunellesco, early fired with a passion for the remains of ancient Art, went to Rome in company with his friend Donatello to study in the ruins of the capital the rules of Classic Architecture. Already the problem of his life was present to him, for, ere he left Florence, the question of the Cathedral cupola had imposed itself on men's minds. Hence his eager inquiry after every ruin which might throw light on the Roman vaulting system; his study of the Pantheon, and the excavations he undertook in company with his friend, and in an eagerness which gained for them the name of "the treasure-seekers." Yet, though Brunellesco gained much at Rome, the treasure he chiefly sought was not there but in the city he had left. Fever seized him; he returned to Florence, where, in a close study of the Baptistery, he found at last the object of his quest; the

The Dome. Florence

model for that greater dome which should bring the new Cathedral its incomparable crown.

Not that our artist was a mere copyist of the earlier work, marvellously though that model met the conditions of the problem he had to face. The true genius never fears to be indebted to others, for, while borrowing freely, it always finds a way to assert its independence in that other higher freedom, the liberty to modify and to adapt. Thus the first freedom is justified of the second, and the resultant work of art stands above challenge as the artist's own, fused with his fire and formed in his image. This then is what we find in the Dome of Florence. Substantially, constructively, it is the Church of San Giovanni expanded and lifted in an apotheosis half-way to heaven. Yet how fine and just the genius which not only found means to "hang that Dome in air," but transformed it in its transference, that it might more exquisitely fit the late-built Church it came to crown. Clearly Brunellesco had not wasted his time in Rome. Not there indeed, but at Florence, did he find the model he sought; yet in these modifications for which the case before him called, in these inventions brought forth one by one to meet each fresh difficulty of construction by some revival of long-forgotten practice, we see the ripe fruit of his Roman studies, the revelation of a mind, not only powerful in itself, but fully furnished with the means to give its most daring dreams due body in material stone and lime.

With regard to the principal point here, the constructive relation between the Dome of Florence and her Baptistery, the words of Brunellesco himself are explicit, leaving us in no doubt that the later was derived from the earlier building. Passing by, as of trifling consequence, those earlier attempts, jealousies and intrigues where, as he tells of them, Vasari may be supposed to have mingled much fable with his facts, we come to the critical period 1417-20, and to the moment when the Board of Works required Brunellesco to give them his scheme for the Cupola in writing, that he as well as they might be bound by contract to all the main features of construction. The original has been lost, but the words of the great artist survive, not in Vasari's page alone, but as reported, with

trifling differences, by the anonymous author who knew Brunellesco personally and wrote his life. Here then are some extracts: "I have made up my mind to build this vault internally in sections corresponding to the sides, and to give it the form of the pointed arch. . . . Let there be twenty-four ribs, eight at the angles and sixteen in the sides . . . in each side two ribs, and above, let there be small tunnel vaults between one space and another." To which may be added the important fact, recorded by Vasari, that Brunellesco's rival, Ghiberti, having agreed to show his capacity by designing the *catena* of the vault, did so very much because he knew what a helpful model was at hand in the structure of the Baptistery; "If ye had not ploughed with my heifer ye had not found out my riddle."

The same conclusion results from a study of the principal detail in which the Dome differs from the Baptistery. The Anonimo reports Brunellesco to have said: "Let another cupola be made outside and over the first . . . that it may be of a greater and more swelling magnificence." Now the comparison implied here in the word *greater* can only refer to the Baptistery which the new Dome was designed to follow and at the same time surpass. And in fact, passing from words to things, all we have said is abundantly confirmed by a study of the constructive scheme common to the two buildings. When we compare them, it is plain that the great novelty of Brunellesco, his outer dome with its magnificently swelling curve, is merely a clever modification of the upper wall and tangential roof of the Baptistery; very much as the drum, on which he wisely chose to set his dome for greater effect, corresponds to the vertical and substantial body of the earlier building. Cellular construction is the inner secret of both vaults; in both the static system is founded, as we have already remarked, on eight principal and sixteen subsidiary ribs, connected above by continuous tunnel vaulting. In the Baptistery an effect of height was gained by building the base of the outer vault in vertical continuation of the lower walls. In the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, where no such effect was needed, Brunellesco skilfully shaped his outer vault to a uniform curve which happily repeats, in a new

magnificence, what it encloses. Thus genius works, not without material; and in this case the material in question, the model so aptly modified and magnified, is, past all question, the more ancient Cathedral of Florence, the "bel San Giovanni" of Dante.

Here a further inquiry offers itself. Was this idea of going to San Giovanni for a model, and of reviving the ancient methods of vaulting it exhibits, original to Brunellesco; and, if not, whence and how did it occur to him? "I have made up my mind," he says, "to build this vault in sections corresponding to the sides," and in these last words our question begins to find its answer, or at least we learn in what direction that answer is to be sought. We are to remember that in 1420 the base of the cupola was already built from the ground-level to the line where the great drum is set. That base then already had its form; it was a regular octagon, not above alone by favour of niche or pendentive, but octagonal throughout, from its supports in the great pier masses of the crossing to where the four mighty arches bore over the four spaces of nave, transepts and choir, walls that bound and formed the pier faces with themselves into a solid figure of eight. But, this being so, the plan of the base being already a regular octagon, differing from that of the Baptistery only in size—the proportion is something like that of 19 to 26 in the sides—it is difficult not to think that the idea of vaulting the Cathedral crossing on the plan of San Giovanni must have lain in the mind of the Board of Works at least from the time when this part of the great Church was designed. Let us now see how far such an idea will carry us back.

The final decision regarding the form of the crossing belongs to the year 1367, when, on the 25th of October, a great council of citizens and artists resolved that "the building best pleased them according to the model made by the architects and painters . . . in the house of the said Church by the Campanile, which model should be followed in the building of the said Church." The artists were eight in number, including Benci di Cione the architect, and Taddeo Gaddi and Orcagna the painters. They had been at work on this design ever since the 20th August, 1366,

when they first got their commission from the City and Board of Works. Thus the plan on which Brunellesco raised his dome was determined at least fifty years before his time, not only in general, but even in all its details of position, measurement and proportion.

The records of the Board of Works show that these details were the subject of much discussion, and even variation, till they fell into their final shape as and when we have seen. But if, neglecting such *minutiæ*, and the tedious and perplexed story of their various forms, we fix our attention on the main matter—the choice of a regular octagon as the plan of the crossing—it will not be difficult to carry the design back at least ten years further. In 1357, on the 5th of July, the Bishop of Narni blessed, with much civic and religious pomp, the foundation-stone of Santa Maria del Fiore, the new Church meant to take the place not merely of the ancient Santa Reparata, but even of the building commenced on this site by Arnolfo in 1296, and continued intermittently till the death of Giotto, in 1336, brought these earlier works to a complete standstill. But the new departure of 1357 implied a plan, and in fact we find that already, in June of that year, the Board of Works held several meetings, where Francesco Talenti appears as chief architect, and of his council are such names as Fra Jacopo Talenti of Santa Maria Novella (perhaps brother of the former), and Andrea Orcagna. It remains to be seen whether this plan was complete, and if so what form it gave to the crossing. Written documents fail us here, but there is reason to think that evidence of another kind is ready to supply their place.

Fra Jacopo Talenti was that monastic architect who built the famous Spanish Chapel, the larger and later Chapter-house of Santa Maria Novella, and it is not impossible that Andrea Orcagna may have been one of the artists employed to decorate its walls, as Taddeo Gaddi almost certainly was another. All this prepares us to find in the figure of Santa Maria del Fiore, painted on the east wall of the Spanish Chapel, a perspective elevation of the actual design adopted for the Duomo in 1357. For the will of the founder, Domenico Guidalotti, assures us that no painting had been begun here before his death in September, 1355, and the form

of the clearstorey lights as they appear in the fresco—windows and not *occhi*—being that condemned by the Board of Works in 1363, shows that this view of the Duomo must have been finished before the latter year. But a painting of Santa Maria del Fiore done between 1355 and 1363, and, if not by Gaddi and Orcagna, at least put on the Chapter-house wall while they and Talenti stand by, what can it well give us but the other Talenti's design for the Cathedral as approved in 1357?

Before beginning to examine the evidence thus available for the form of the crossing as planned at the commencement of the new works, we may as well dispose of another way of looking at the Santa Maria Novella fresco; the more that what we shall have to say of it will imply the statement of a new and conclusive argument for the view we have adopted. The able and eloquent Camillo Boito in his *Architettura del Medio Evo in Italia* (1880) was, perhaps, the first to restore to Francesco Talenti his due honour in connection with the fabric of Santa Maria del Fiore. In the part of his book devoted to this subject he makes much of the fresco at Santa Maria Novella, contending however that it should be regarded as a reproduction in perspective of Arnolfo's original design. Several objections to such a view occur at once to the mind. Thus it is difficult to imagine that the plan of 1296 could have survived to the painter's time across a period when the evidence of documents shows us that Florence, for many years at a time, forgot her new Cathedral altogether and utterly neglected its building. Again, Boito himself publishes the capital document of June 19th, 1357, from which he deduces the fact (p. 195) that the plan then adopted differed widely from that of Arnolfo. Yet, in that case, what probability can there be that the contemporaneous fresco should give us, not the design of the day, but that of 1296?

In fact, the more closely we study the question the more we shall be convinced that our way of reading this painting is the right one. Boito descends to detail and to illustration. He determines the difference of full fifty *braccia* as the measure by which the Church begun in 1357 should exceed that of 1296, and presents us with a ground plan where the larger and later is seen superimposed on the

smaller and earlier fabric. In this plan the base of the Campanile is shown beside the Church, and as the elevation of Giotto's tower appears in the fresco, it is only natural to think of using this as a unit of measurement. Evidently, if Talenti's plan was so much longer than Arnolfo's, the proportion borne by the Campanile to the body of the Church in the fresco may be trusted to show which of the two designs—of 1296 or 1357—is there represented. Now, speaking roughly, the side of the Campanile steps rather more than eight times into the length of Arnolfo's Church, and about ten and a half times into that of Talenti. It is the latter proportion that obtains between Church and Campanile as painted in the Spanish Chapel, so that we have here the final and conclusive proof of what all likelihood had already led us to conjecture: that the painting in question gives us the Church as it stood in the minds of the men of 1357. Thus the very illustrations furnished by Boito give us the means of disproving his theory.

Taking then the Duomo as painted in the Cappellone for what it doubtless was—the design of 1357—we ask what it shows of Talenti's plan for the crossing in walls and roof. This part of the Church is octagonal from the base upwards, and is crowned by a dome which corresponds to the octagon on which it rests; each side of the octagon determining its own *spicco* or compartment of the vault, and these eight divisions meeting above at the base of the lantern which crowns the whole. Two other details carry still further the correspondence of this design with that of the existing building; the dome as drawn here is markedly if slightly pointed, and its divisions are outlined by eight heavy ribs of stone which spring from the angles of the octagon to meet in the lantern base. As the fresco gives us, naturally, an elevation only and not a section of the building, we cannot say whether, in its internal structure, the dome of Talenti was meant to be single or double. One marked difference, and one only, obtains between this and the design of 1420. Here there is no drum, and the curve of the dome springs directly from the roof-level without that advantage of added height which gives such grandeur to the cupola of Brunellesco.

It may be said indeed that proof is wanting in the design of

1357 of that intention to borrow from the Baptistery which certainly seems to have guided the mind of Brunellesco. That Talenti meant to make the sides of his octagon continue upwards and inwards as the corresponding compartments of an eight-sided pointed vault is plain, but this by itself, though something, is not enough to show a conscious dependence on the forms of the ancient Duomo of Florence. At this point it is that we do well to take account of decoration as a safe guide to the builders' constructive ideal. Nardini Mospignotti, to whom we have so largely referred when speaking of San Giovanni, points out the almost exact correspondence between the exterior marbles of the Tribunes in Santa Maria del Fiore and those of the Baptistery compartments. But if the builders of the later fourteenth century were content to borrow design in so slight a particular from the neighbouring Church, can we suppose they would neglect so convenient a model when called to face what we know to have been their main preoccupation, the turning of a great vault over a high octagonal base? The solution of this very difficulty lay close at hand, and we may be sure, even from what Santa Maria Novella shows us, that it guided all their thought.

But this matter of decoration may be trusted to carry us still further. The Church of Arnolfo, the new Santa Reparata, begun in 1296 and continued by his successor Giotto, is not, as we have seen, the building that appears in the fresco of the Cappellone, nor does anything remain to tell us how these great artists meant to finish eastward the fabric they commenced from the façade. But the singular irregularities of the nave in the existing Santa Maria del Fiore show that, in part at any rate, and especially towards the west, the earlier building remained to impose some at least of its exterior completed forms on the Church commenced *de novo* in 1357. There is, at any rate, the certainty that the breadth of the existing nave and aisles is that of 1296; the probability that the marbles which form the outer casing of the western bays were placed there by Giotto; even the possibility that some of this decoration, low down and near the façade, may still show the work and mind of Arnolfo. Nor does any one doubt that the neighbour-

ing and corresponding Campanile was not only built but decorated in similar style as far as the line of his famous bas-reliefs by Giotto himself; the contemporary Pucci assures us of the fact in his *Centiloquio*. Now all this work is undoubtedly inspired by the marbles of San Giovanni; intended to continue a time-honoured Florentine tradition, and so to bind in one the later with the earlier Duomo that face each other across so narrow a space. From 1296 onwards, then, to the completion of the whole under Brunellesco, it is San Giovanni that continually imposes its forms, of decoration and construction alike, on the builders of the new Cathedral.

Notice, then, the wider conclusion implied in this view of the facts. The Renaissance in architecture, which distinguished the buildings of the early fifteenth century, was founded on a return to classic models. But such, in the view of that and of the previous age, was the Baptistery of Florence. We must forget, as we now think of it, all those conclusions which determine its true origin as a Christian Church of the fifth century, and now remember only that, in Brunellesco's time and for long before and after, this building was considered as a pagan Temple, which comparatively slight modification had transformed into a Church without interfering with the substantial and essential lines of its architecture. So thought Aretino and Politian in the heyday of the Renaissance, and their opinion was but the survival of that held and expressed in the fourteenth century by Boccaccio and Sacchetti, by Pucci and Villani, the novelists and chroniclers. Even in later days, when a sounder view began to suggest itself, this tradition was still supported by the arguments of Baldinucci and Borghini.

Talenti, then, in taking the Baptistery for his model, consciously recurred, in the very spirit of the Renaissance, to the style and methods of Rome. But Talenti, born with his century, or nearly, and dying in 1374, was the contemporary of Petrarch and of Boccaccio, and in him therefore the movement of return to classicism is seen extending itself from the field of letters to that of the building art. Nay further, and even more surely, Giotto and Arnolfo, who studied the same Church and made it their model, at

least in the decoration of the new Cathedral and Campanile, connect directly with the yet earlier school of the Pisani—Pucci tells us that Andrea Pisano worked on the Campanile—those artists who, even in the thirteenth century, had begun to make sculpture live again in the study and imitation of classic design.

The Renaissance, then, is no flood which breaks suddenly and unexpectedly from the earth in its full force. What we meet in the times of Brunellesco is a river indeed, and of mighty power, but one prepared naturally, for a hundred years and more, by the incidence and combination of many distinct streams of tendency. It springs in the Campo Santo of Pisa, where Giovanni and Niccolò find new inspiration in their treatment of the human form as copyists of classic bas-reliefs. We see it moving in the art of Cimabue and of Duccio under all their Byzantine formalism; on another line it urges Giotto in his splendid return to nature, where formalism becomes a vanishing quantity; in yet another—that of letters—it guides the study, and even the travels, of the fourteenth-century scholars; at last, in the following age, it has its full triumph in the work of the Humanists, and the art of Brunellesco and Bramante. But midway, like some island which such a stream throws up to show its gathering force, stands Santa Maria del Fiore of Florence, the very flower and monument alike of the earlier and later Renaissance.

The completion of the Dome, the noble crown of Florentine Architecture, was closely followed by one of the most striking and important scenes in the history of the city, a scene which developed its dramatic close in this very Cathedral, and beneath the great cupola which the genius of Brunellesco had raised, as it were, on purpose for such a ceremony. In 1439 the Council, which had assembled under Eugenius IV at Ferrara, transferred its sittings to Florence. To attend it John Palæologus the Emperor, and Joseph the Patriarch, of Constantinople, with many Greek Prelates, had passed to Italy in the ships of the Pope; for the purpose of Eugenius was to bring about at this assembly a new union of East and West. The Pope with his Cardinals and Bishops, the Emperor and Patriarch with their suite and Prelates, to the number of seven

hundred, now crossed the Apennines and fixed their abode in Florence; the former in the civic building of the *Sale del Papa* adjoining the Convent of Santa Maria Novella; the latter in lodgings provided them by the Commune among the houses of the Peruzzi near the Borgo dei Greci. If their entry by the Porta San Gallo had been imposing, even more solemn and remarkable was the assembly which gathered in the newly completed Duomo to witness the last, the crowning act in this work of conciliation. It took place on St. Romolo's Day, the 6th of July, 1439. The members of Council, with Pope and Palæologus at their head, came to Santa Maria del Fiore in a procession which showed more than two hundred mitres. Florence had for some years past been accustomed to the sight of the Papal Court, but nothing like the splendour of this day had she beheld before, even when, in 1436, the Pope went in procession to bless the newly completed Dome. Within the Church all was prepared as befitted so important a ceremony. The Latins had their places on the Gospel side of the High Altar, and the Greeks opposite; Pope and Emperor thus facing each other from their high seats across the front of the Holy Table. The Pope sung the Mass, the Gospels being read twice, first in Greek then in Latin. Cardinal Cesarini read the Decree of Union in Latin, and Cardinal Bessarion repeated the document in Greek, whereupon these Prelates exchanged the kiss of peace as a visible sign of the accomplished union. The Greek Church, while conserving her ancient liberties, had adopted the *Filioque* of the Latin Creed regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit, and had agreed to yield obedience to the Pope as sole spiritual head of Christendom; in sign of which submission the whole Council, with the Emperor at their head, now came forward one by one to kneel before Eugenius and to kiss his hand. Thus ended in a storm of bells this ever memorable chapter in the history of the Church, and, we may add, in that of Florence.

The Council in its purpose of conciliation stands in close connection with what we have already found reason to consider—the whole Mediæval theory of Church and Empire. That theory implied a double Hierarchy of power, Civil and Ecclesiastical; not

too sharply distinguished indeed, but which, in the view of these times, admitted of two possible Heads, and two only, the Pope and the Emperor. The great Schism found its root in the pretensions of Rome, supported by the fiction of Constantine's Donation and answered sharply by the Eastern Decrees *in Trullo*. Now another Dome, that of Florence, echoes the palinode of these. On the secular side Rome had pretended to confer on Charlemagne a legal right as legitimate successor of Constantine VI, disputed, however, by the Byzantine Emperors. Now the last of these, in damask and jewels, bends his handsome face—it shines for us still, thanks to Gozzoli's wonderful pencil, in the Riccardi Chapel —at the knee of the Pope. In a word, the eloquent answer to the Western theory of Church and State had been, all along, the continued and independent course of the Byzantine Empire and Patriarchate, which here and now rendered their submission. It would seem, therefore, that the ancient Western ideal had at length gained its victory and come to its kingdom.

It is time, however, to look a little more closely behind the scenes of this Council. The pliability of the Greeks, it appears, was not disinterested. Their Emperor felt his weakness in face of Amurath and the Turks, daily drawing nearer the Bosphorus from the Asiatic side. He hoped for help from the Powers of the West, and so was ready to buy it by concessions to Western ways of thinking. Among the Greek Clergy who attended the Council many were bitterly opposed to the Union, and a majority in its favour was only secured by the free use of money in bribes to those otherwise irreconcilable. All this modifies our view of the accomplished peace, which we must perforce regard as hollow and insincere, an impression which the subsequent history goes far to confirm. The Decrees of Florence, though signed by their Emperor and Prelates, were never accepted in the East. The submission of these Heads to Rome, under pressure of political or private interest, which had brought about an appearance of uniformity, was condemned at Constantinople, and, as it fell before the Turk in 1453, that City bewailed a treachery which could not save, but rather seemed to have called down the just

judgment of Heaven on those who had been unfaithful to their Church and State. The whole situation curiously anticipates that brought about in Italy by the last Council—that of our own times. French bayonets defended the temporal power of the Pope against the rising force of a united Italy. The Council met at Rome in 1869, and proclaimed, against powerful opposition, the Decree of Papal Infallibility. Hardly had this been done when France was threatened from the East, though not as Constantinople had been, and was forced to withdraw her troops from Rome. Then, inevitably, the Temporal Power fell before the enemy at the gate, and thenceforth the men who had opposed the act of the Council felt, like the Greeks, that Heaven itself had spoken against those who betrayed the Truth. So strangely do the events of 1870 carry their correspondence with those of 1453, that what has passed but recently in the Capital of the West throws true light on the fall of Constantinople, and interprets for us the very feelings with which the East must then have regarded the disaster of the day.

The Council of 1439 was thus a failure so far as its principal purpose was concerned, but this was of the less importance that the world had already moved so far towards new horizons in five hundred years that both the original division and this belated attempt to heal it had not now the consequence the Council itself attached to them. Yet still, if, leaving the larger view, we bend our eyes on Florence, it becomes plain that the Council did not dissolve without leaving some results in the city where it was held. One of these—the most trivial—we have already touched through our passing reference to Gozzoli. Nor was he the only artist whose eye rejoiced in the beauty of the bearded Emperor, or noted the strange splendour of his suite. Angelico too caught fire, as witness his work, where once at least the Eastern head-dresses he had remarked lend their quaint and varied forms to his pencil. This impulse given to the art of Painting may seem a trifling thing, yet it was symptomatic of a genuine thrill in which Florence, perhaps through her Greek blood, responded to the coming of these strangers. We repeat what we have said before, that the Latin genius is never fully itself save as reached and, as it

were, fertilized from Greece and the East. What if the Council from this point of view mark an epoch at Florence! Is this new influence from Constantinople to come as the herald and the determining cause of a fresh development in the West?

The longer we look the more hope there seems of such a result. For, while the Council still sits, another ceremony takes place in Santa Maria del Fiore, when the bones of San Zanobi are finally translated, with all due pomp and circumstance, to that vault under the eastern apse which Brunellesco had contrived for their reception. It is as if the city had begun again to ponder the ancient days of her first Christianity, or the Council on its Latin side to answer the submission of the Greeks by acknowledging courteously the local debt to Greece for early light and leading in the first steps of the Faith. And when the Council passed, behold, in Florence left to herself, at least a new and boundless enthusiasm for the language of the Eastern Empire she had once known so well and never entirely forgotten or neglected. The Florentine Academy, where Greek was studied with passion, and the consequent Renaissance in its full development, were born of the Council of 1439. What this meant and how it came about deserve our most careful attention.

With the Florentines, as they bear the body of their Saint to the Cathedral apse, let us recall the early days of the Faith for a moment, that we may trace the consequent history of the Christian ideal in the *City*, and see more clearly where we now stand in the progress of its development. The *City* had meant everything to the Latin, the Roman, and when he became a Christian it came to mean more still, as the man himself developed. Of this spiritual interpretation the Church was the proper depositary, and she should by right have continued to direct and secure its application to life and society, had not her own growing secularisation brought her, at the close of the first Christian millennium, to a condition of premature old age which unfitted her for the great mission. In the opening of the next period behold another element emerge, that of the new civic life in Italy, potent to receive and develop the divine deposit just in so far as it may find power to realise that

ideal in the real cities which spring and grow under its influence. But the cities are no more exempt from decay and decline than the Church. Even Florence, whose growth was so remarkable during the earlier ages of her independence, had, in the fourteenth century, begun to show symptoms of weakness. The splendid ideals she cherished, and in part realised, when she planned with Arnolfo her new Cathedral, seemed to have spent their force. An ominous sign of what was in store had already appeared in the tyranny of the Duke of Athens, and now, in 1439, she was about to deny her mighty past by submitting to the rule of the Medici. Everywhere in Italy, indeed, the cities, once free, were falling, and the time of the Tyrants was at hand.

Thus the real meaning of the important moment at which we are arrived begins to disclose itself. The finer life of Italy with all its promise is henceforth to be dwarfed and repressed on the political side. It must find a new sphere of activity then, and is, in fact, about to enter on a development in which Florence plays a leading part by finding a new vehicle fit to carry the old imperishable ideal to further and world-wide issues. Let us resume: the See had once played its part in the great tradition only to give place to the mediæval State. Correspondingly the State now hands on to another what she had received from her precursor. And this other, the third in the great succession, is the School, preparing to realise and extend the ideal of the *City* in the almost unlimited form of the Republic of Letters and of Art.

The part held by the Council of Florence in this new birth can hardly be doubtful, and has indeed been generally recognised. From 1397, it is true, Manuel Chrysoloras and George Trapezuntius had done much for the study of Greek at Florence and at Rome; it was a pupil of the former, Lionardo Bruni, in his quality of Secretary to the Commune, who welcomed the foreign guests of 1439 in their own language. But these were only preliminaries; the real impulse came with the Council itself, where Latin and Greek were used indifferently in the debates, thanks to Nicholas of Euboea, who translated the words of each speaker into the language of the other country. And these meetings of the Council

prolonged themselves, as it were, in more private and informal colloquies, where language itself—and not unnaturally—was often the subject discussed, with many an acute appeal to the records of classic antiquity. The Pope's reception-room at Santa Maria Novella, with its flowered walls, had seen just such a meeting and discussion even in 1435, when Poggio Bracciolini displayed his erudition, and, now that the Greeks were come, the stimulus to a new intellectuality rose to its height with the vision of another language and literature awaiting conquest. Nor were these scholars, who had already drunk deeply of the classic spring in their own land and tongue, the men to hang back from the invitation to so fair an enterprise of the human spirit.

One of the most prominent and picturesque figures in the Council of Florence was that of the Greek philosopher Gemisto Pletone—to give him the name by which the Italians knew him—now more than eighty years of age, and a perfect mine of thought and erudition. His life, led under the last and weakest days of the Byzantine Empire, was spent in that noble but distracted dream which he has embodied in his *Nomoi;* the awakening and rebuilding of his country and race by a wise return to the precepts of antiquity. We have noticed already how, for the moment, Church and State were helpless ; had played their part and seen their day pass. This was what the man of age and experience felt ; he despaired of both in their existing form, and was therefore, in his place as Imperial Councillor, one of the keenest opponents of the proposed union, from which he saw clearly no real good was likely to arise. His thoughts at the close of the Council, therefore, can be easily imagined : he must have felt feeble with more than the weakness of his years ; disgusted, as if he had taken the long journey in vain. Yet it was not in vain. His presence in Florence, the weight of his learning, the power of his eloquence, made their mark. Ficino, proud to sit at his feet, tells us it was above all Gemisto who inspired the first idea of the Florentine Academy. His devotion to Plato restored that philosophy to its due place in the view and thought of the West, which Aristotle, read *secundum Latinos*, had too long usurped. And

when the new vehicle—the School—readmitted the Christian ideal, from which, alas, Gemisto had nearly turned in despair, it was the Platonism learned first from him that gave it wings to escape the old limitations of thought too narrowly Latin, and thus a future in which to develop its powers with a new freedom even beyond the Alps and the sea.

This was the age of the breaking of bonds indeed. Constantinople fell in 1453, and the Turkish victory drove westward a new band of scholars, such as John Argyropoulos, who came to Florence to enforce the impulse already felt there. The Platonic Academy was formally founded with Marsilio Ficino at its head, and, almost at the same time, the invention of printing added an undreamed-of power to the growing Republic of Letters, of which the press became, as it were, the Secretariat and General Intelligence department. No wonder that its liberty was jealously defended by the men of the Fourth Estate against the oppression of the Index! Committed to print, the thoughts of men multiplied a thousandfold their influence and importance. Thus the movement, which had begun in Florence, became, as it were, not so much Italian as European; crossing the Alps; making no account of geographical or racial distinctions; re-forming the nations to the shape which we now recognise as that of the modern world.

We have stumbled upon a great word, on which we must pause a little ere we leave it. The *Reformation*, in its narrower and special sense, was as surely connected with the whole movement of thought begun in the Platonic Academy as that school itself was with the Council of Florence. For Reuchlin had been a pupil of Argyropoulos, and the powerful association of those who called themselves the "Brethren of the Common Life" represented accurately enough in Germany the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. But it is well known that this northern school gave intellectual birth to many of the coadjutors of Luther.

We may seem to have wandered far enough from our point of departure; whether this be so or not, it is certainly time that we returned to it. The Græco-Christian ideal of the *City* had well-nigh perished in the materialism of the Latin Church, nor had

it been fulfilled in the Italian State. The hope of their successor, the School, to do better than these, lay in its receiving this ideal once more and going further than its predecessors towards the realisation of it. It is a fair sign then that the first book which issues from the press is the text of Holy Scripture, and a promise of good that the new philosophy follows the idealism of Plato rather than the realism of Aristotle. And the result is what we should expect; the Church reappears, but it is the Church in a new development, not less real because in a sense invisible; the spiritual city which counts as its inhabitants all true worshippers of the true God without distinction of race or rite or name. Humanism, the widely cosmopolitan spirit of the world of culture and letters introduced by the Renaissance, is, above all, a way of looking at men and things which only needs to be applied in the religious sphere to result in that corresponding conception of the "invisible Church" which was one of the deepest thoughts of the Reformation. The intellectual tendencies of the time were one, and thus, strange as it may seem, Florence was really and even originally concerned in a distant and alien religious movement with which, directly, she had little or nothing to do.

The remoter consequences of the Renaissance are too vast for our canvas. Here we can only point out that the old succession reappeared as if it were the inevitable line of all human development. To the Church as modified by the Reformation succeeded the reform of European politics inaugurated by the peace of Westphalia, and issuing in the modern distribution of power among the States that arose, like the free cities of the Middle Ages, out of the decline and decay of the Empire. And then, once more, appeared the School in that new shape with which the past century has made us familiar: a School of Science rather than of Letters, a new Renaissance laughing at Metaphysic as that of the fifteenth century had jested at the Scholastics, and pointing with triumph to its impressive achievements in the discovery and use of Natural Law. Nothing could seem more sharply divorced from the past than this characteristic attitude of the human spirit in our own time, and yet, as we study its relation to what has gone before,

the certainty grows that we are looking on the last phase of a movement in the progress of the world which had its beginning in the Renaissance, and therefore at Florence during the Quattrocento. The last or the first; for be sure that the sense of novelty and the promise of the future which mark our own time were as keenly felt in the Italy of five hundred years ago, and that this community between these days and ours, this sense of a new beginning we share with them, is no superficial correspondence, but arises, ultimately, from a relation of cause and effect between the new departure of that age and the further promise of our own. Thus the Council of 1439 in its effects on Florence may be considered to have planted there the germ of the modern world.

It may well seem as if, under the discursive treatment we have applied to it, the Spirit of Florence itself—our proper subject—had ended by escaping us altogether; like some fine and volatile salt which the labours of the chemist only succeed in dissipating even while he strives to condense it in sensible and palpable shape. Yet was not this Spirit called of old the *Quintessence*, and is there anything in the whole matter more noteworthy than just this escape, which resembles here the parting of a soul set free to fulfil its further destiny in new worlds and distant ages? This is the very case of Florence, and had we not come at last to such a point of elusion we might well have doubted whether our study had led us aright.

It is to be remembered too that if here we pause, it is only to approach the same great subject from another and possibly a more definite point of view. The Substance of Florence, with which we naturally began, has led us to consider the Spirit of the place, and these two in their turn point inevitably to the Form in which they resulted by the action of the second on the first. The Form of the Florentine Government in its different phases will occupy, then, our remaining chapters, and as it is through its shaping of the Substance that the Spirit, itself invisible, can best be seen and realised, we have here at once the reason why, as yet, that of Florence has almost escaped our grasp, and the hope which bids us wait the further moment of its manifestation.

PART IV

MONUMENTS OF THE FLORENTINE STATE

CHAPTER I

BADIA A SETTIMO AND THE PROVA DI FUOCO

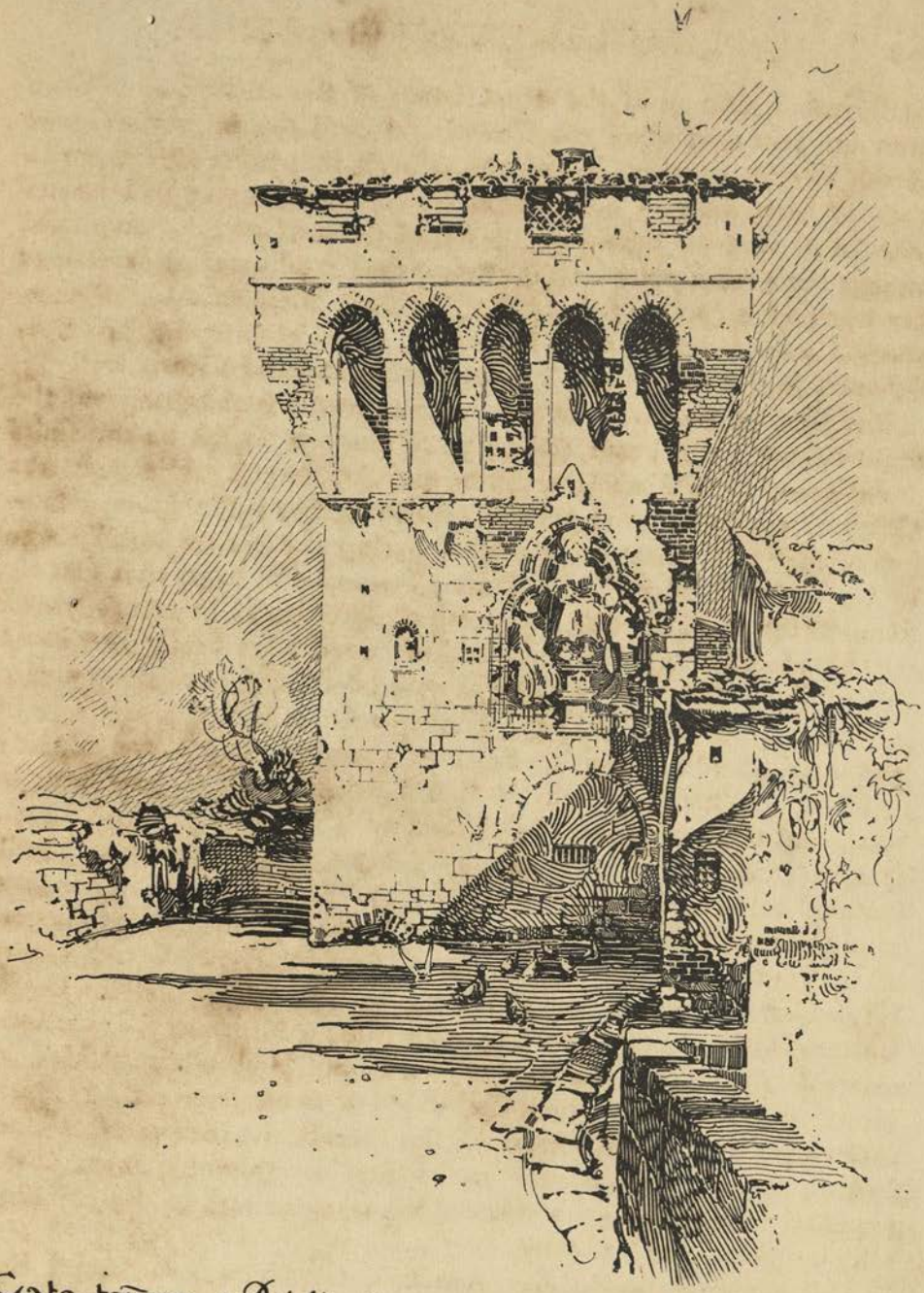
THE district of Settimo, on the left bank of the Arno halfway between Florence and Signa, has an ancient and interesting history of its own. There used to be a tradition that its name was derived from the Abbey; this being the seventh religious house erected in Florence or its territory by Ugo, Marquis of Tuscany: so at least Villani tells us. This tale has been disposed of, once for all, by Borghini and by later inquirers who point out that the name Settimo, like those, still more familiar, of Quarto, Quinto and Sesto, at Florence and elsewhere throughout Italy, comes from the Roman mileage of the province, and is an indication of distance, equivalent to the expression *ad septimum lapidem.* In support of this view it may be pointed out that, long before the days of the Marchese Ugo, the district in question was already known by this name, as the deed of Speciosus, dated in A.D. 724, mentions "the Pieve of San Giuliano a Settimo." And indeed the matter is in itself sufficiently clear to win assent, as soon as stated, on the ground of its own inherent probability.

When Settimo begins to emerge into the light of history from the darkness that lies upon the ages preceding the tenth century, it appears as an important part of the possessions belonging to the noble Lombard family of the Cadolinghi, feudal lords of Fucecchio and of many lands besides in different parts of Tuscany. This

family was a branch of the great house of the Alberti, as is plain from the fact that when the Cadolinghi died out in the early part of the twelfth century, it was the Alberti that succeeded them in such of their fiefs as could pass by inheritance. It will be remembered that we have already found the seat of the Cadolinghi among the places on which Florence first made war in defence of her commerce (p. 13); destroying in 1113 their castle of Montecascioli near Settimo and, it is said, even slaying its principal defender in the person of Rempoctus the Imperial Vicar.

The first of the family whom we find mentioned belongs to the tenth century, and bears the name of Cadolo, which he transmits as an eponym to his descendants the Cadolinghi. His wife was Gemma, daughter of Landolfo of Benevento; the house whose independent, almost regal, position during the earlier Middle Age we have already remarked. It may be, as Lami says, that Cadolo founded the Badia of San Salvatore at Settimo, as he certainly was the founder of another Benedictine house built under the same title at Fucecchio. If not, the honour belongs to his son Lottario, in whose times (A.D. 998) the Emperor Otho issued a privilege in favour of San Salvatore at Settimo, showing that it was already in being. What is certain is that Lottario built largely here in 1004, and the matter may be cleared up if we suppose, with Lami, that in that year definite monastic form was given to a Church founded some time before, either by Cadolo or his son. This view would seem to find sufficient support in the tenor of two privileges, of 1015 and 1047, granted to the Abbey by Henry I and Henry III, which say: "Situated at the place called Settimo, which Count Lottario for his soul's weal has made to be a Monastery." Lottario married Adelasia, daughter of Vigellino, and often resided at Montecascioli, from which he dated a deed in 1006. He was probably the founder, certainly the munificent patron of the adjoining Abbey, which rose in its first considerable form at his expense during the years succeeding 1004 as one of the principal Cluniac houses of Tuscany.

The son of Lottario and Adelasia, Guglielmo, surnamed Bulgaro, succeeded his father as Count of Borgonuovo, Mangona, and



Gate-tower of Badia from South

The crenelles have been filled & the whole roofed as a dovecot. It is called la Colombaia.

Montecascioli, and continued the traditional liberality of his family in favour of the Badia at Settimo. In 1048 he executed a deed transferring to the Monastery his property called Lo Stale (the Hospice) on the Apennine between Florence and Bologna, and took occasion to describe the Abbey in this document as "our property at Settimo." Conte Guglielmo was a friend and supporter of San Giovanni Gualberto in his crusade against ecclesiastical corruption, and this relation made itself felt at Settimo, where, during the lifetime of the Saint, if not longer, the Rule of Vallombrosa superseded that of Clugny. The Countess Gasdia, wife of Conte Guglielmo, was buried at Settimo in a sarcophagus of white marble.

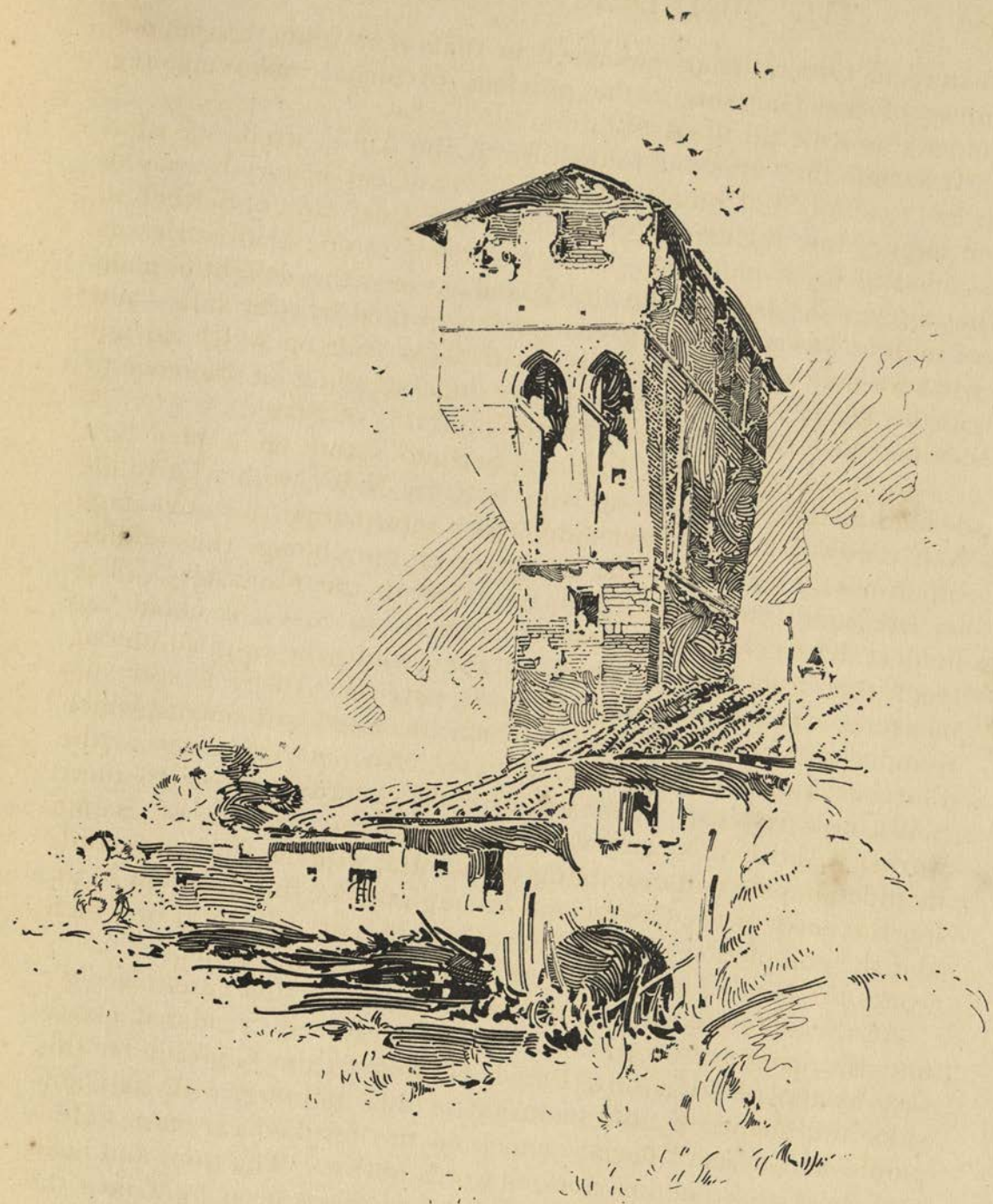
The next in succession was Count Uguccione, son of Guglielmo and Gasdia. He confirmed the privileges of the Abbey in 1090, describing it as "Monasterium nostrum" as before. Yet a change had meanwhile taken place, and one of some moment, for in the list of Vallombrosian houses received in that year under the special protection of the Roman See the name of Settimo does not occur. It would thus appear that the Abbey, probably on the death of San Giovanni Gualberto, had reverted to the Clugniacs. Count Uguccione married Cilia, daughter of Teuzzo, who, dying in 1096, was buried at Settimo in the tomb of her mother-in-law Gasdia. Their common residence, like that of their predecessors, was the castle of Montecascioli, from which indeed Uguccione dates his privilege of 1090. According to Ughelli, this Count and Countess declared their choice to live under Lombard and not Roman Law; a sign that these Cadolinghi belonged to the foreign feudal aristocracy and not to the native Tuscan stock. The family, in a feudal sense, ended in the person of Count Ugo, son of Uguccione and Cilia, who died in 1113 without heirs of his body. Hence the war of that year for possession of his seat at Montecascioli; for, though Ugo had lived in good relations with the city, Florence justly dreaded his successors the Alberti, and resolved to dispute in arms, as she successfully did, the possession of that commanding position. To complete this historical preamble it is only necessary to add that in 1236 the Abbey passed from the Benedictine to the

Cistercian Order, being colonised in that year from the famous house of San Galgano in the province of Siena, and remaining under this Rule till the dissolution.

It is time that we should now turn to the Abbey itself, see what it has to show, and return thus upon its ancient history by way of an inquiry into the existing remains of the great days of Settimo in stone and brick and lime. The excursion is one that carries us but a few miles beyond the city boundary into the delightful plain of middle Tuscany—that green garden girdled by grey hills—and what we may hope to bring back with us is fruit on which no toll can be levied at the gate: a better understanding of Florence in her first historic appearance and rising forms of State.

The buildings of the Badia a Settimo stand on a plan best defined as that of an oblong lying S.E. by N.W., with a jut to the N.E. midway in the longer side, and a return from this advantage which nearly reaches to the E. corner of the oblong, thus adding an irregular triangle to the main body of the Monastery. The longest diameter of the whole, from N.E. to S.W., is about 240 feet; that from S.E. to N.W. is 271; while the original oblong measures 271 feet by 200. In good part the Abbey is still surrounded with the wall, crowned by machicolated battlements, which Florence built for its defence in 1371. An outlying tower to the S.W., now isolated, opened a carefully guarded access to these works. Above this gateway stand colossal figures of Saints moulded in pale and crumbling terra-cotta, with inscriptions recording the entry of the Cistercians—though not by this door—in 1236, and the completion of the fortifications in 1371; in right of which works the city set her lily here in large and lasting stone.

At the opposite side of the buildings from this gate-tower we find the irregular projection already mentioned; rendered necessary by the addition of a Parish Church to the Convent on this side, and shaped by the inclusion of this building, with its Campanile and a small burial chapel, in the fortified *enceinte*. Here also there are some inscriptions worth notice. The front and head panels of the Cadolingian sarcophagus have been built into the base of the Church façade, where they still show the epitaphs of the



Gate-tower of Badia from East

Countesses Gasdia and Cilia. The base of the Campanile—circular and not polygonal like its later and upper storeys—has two inscribed stones; one, of great beauty, with the words *Gloria sit Domino;* the other so defaced as to present a very problem of interpretation. Lami reads it, lightheartedly, as follows: "Taccus Abbatis Monasterii Septimi Domni Petri seu Comitis Vulgari Guillelmi tempore fecit. Indictione I, kalendis Juliis"—which would refer this part of the belfry to the year 1047. He is almost certainly wrong as regards much of this reading, yet it is quite possible that the date he assigns may be approximately correct, for among the few words that can here be traced with certainty are the title and name of Conte Guglielmo; to whose times the Campanile of Settimo, at least in its older part, would seem therefore to belong.

It were a mistake, however, to suppose that the Parish Church belongs to the same early age as the adjoining Campanile. In the brick pavement of the left-hand aisle is embedded a small slab of white marble with words that declare it to mark the site of the miracle of San Pietro Igneo. Now the physical condition of this event—the Prova di Fuoco—as we shall presently see, makes it certain that no building could have stood here when it took place in 1068, for the scene of that ordeal by fire must necessarily have been a large open space. The Church, then, is of later date, and everything leads us to accept the common opinion that it was the work of the thirteenth century. To this age belong, evidently, the moulded brick arcade under the eaves of the façade and the constructive cornice of the clearstorey. The Della Robbia frieze that decorates the interior of the Chancel, and the fine marble carving of the ambry in the terminal chapel of the left aisle, are later additions, and the whole interior has been remodelled in the taste of the seventeenth century. In the early days of this Abbey, we repeat, there was no building here. The Campanile of the eleventh century must then have stood free to the N.E. just as the fortified Gate-tower of 1371 came to do on the S.W. of the great Convent.

Leaving then these outlying buildings, let us examine the Abbey itself. The main fabric here lies about a central cloistered space,

whose vaulted ambulatory seems to have been added in the fifteenth century. When we pass from this to the buildings that bound it, however, we find reason to think that here, if anywhere, are the remains of what the Convent was in the days of Lottario, its first founder. On such a site, within a short half-mile of the Arno with its frequent floods that tend to raise continually the surface of the soil by the deposit of fresh alluvium, level is an important witness to age. And if it be true that here the deeper a building lies the older it must be, then by this sign the parts of the Badia adjoining the great cloister to S.E. and N.W. are the most ancient of all. In them the vaults supporting the upper floor rest on columns that are deeply buried in the soil; how deeply proportion and partial excavation enable us roughly to judge. When these columns were set up the ground level must have lain from eight to ten feet lower than it is to-day. Even the pavement of the Parish Church, built in the thirteenth century, lies practically at the present surface level, and if we explain this strange fact by supposing the truth of what is said, that the Church was built *in palco* and approached by steps that saved it from the river floods, this will still sufficiently distinguish the building of the thirteenth century from that practised in the other and doubtless much earlier age which saw the erection of what still bounds the great cloister. Then, a level eight feet at least below that judged necessary in the thirteenth century was enough for the Convent builders: a difference so marked as to account easily for two hundred years of time; thus bringing us to the eleventh century when Conte Lottario built the Badia here. The ancient buildings in question were doubtless, that to the N.W. the Church, and that to the S.E. the Refectory, of the Benedictines and Vallombrosians. Cistercian work subsequent to 1236 is to be recognised in the upper part of the Campanile; the whole Parish Church with the adjoining Novitiate; and the higher storeys added over the ancient Refectory and Abbey Church on each side of the principal cloister. These last additions show decorative brickwork at the eaves corresponding to that on the clearstorey of the Parish Church, and must therefore be assigned to the same period.

Badia a Settimo
North wall with Campanile
of later Church

The chief interest of the Badia a Settimo for the student of Architecture is thus clearly defined; it lies in the ancient semi-subterranean building on the N.W. of the great cloister, which, though now transformed as a *tinaia* or wine vault with presses and rows of wooden vats, retains, in dwarfed and degraded form, the essential features of a noble ecclesiastical building—the Abbey Church of the eleventh century. Sixteen slender stone columns in two rows divide the whole space into a central nave and flanking aisles of nine bays each. The Altar stood at the S.W. end, on a high Chancel occupying two of these bays, and forming the roof of a deep Crypt approached by arched doorways and descending stairs, one leading downwards from the end of each aisle. The capitals are boldly if rudely carved in conventional foliage, some near the Altar more finely, and one showing heads of men in monastic dress. The vaulting that rests on their *abaci* is of fine red brick throughout, arranged so that there is no clearstorey, the whole rising to a uniform level over nave and aisles alike, so as to provide an even floor for the upper part of the building. Such details are significant enough, and appear still more so when compared with those of the corresponding wing on the opposite side of the Cloister, where the space is divided by a single row of columns down the centre in the usual style of a Refectory. Thus it can hardly admit of doubt that this deep-set vaulted hall, divided into nave and aisles, with crypt and raised Chancel complete, is the original Abbey Church built by Conte Lottario in the first half of the eleventh century. What then, we ask, does it teach us of the architecture, and especially of the vaulting, practised in that age and in this province?

To answer this question we must study in detail the unit of construction—the vaulting bay—which, from its centre in the middle nave, spreads itself to the adjoining aisles and determines the form of the whole. The measures of height we must perforce take from the existing floor, remembering always, however, that to these must be added some eight feet more if we would arrive at the true base level, and understand the original proportions of a building which nine centuries have so deeply buried in the soil. Take,

then, an oblong of 15 ft. 2 in. by 12 ft. 8 in., laying it out so that its shorter diameter coincides with the axis of the principal nave, and you have the fundamental form of this architecture. Take, further, four stone columns of plain cylindrical shape, 47¼ in. in girth, arranging them so that their centres coincide with the angles of the oblong already described. Suppose these columns each to lift an *abacus* of 2 ft. 2¼ in. square to a height of 7 ft. 3 in. from the floor: some 15 ft. therefore above the original pavement level. Take two of these *abaci* as they face one another across the longer side of the oblong, and set upon them a round brick arch with a chord of 13 ft. 4 in. at the spring, enclosed in another of like shape, but struck from a higher centre so that its crown reaches a height of 14 ft. 8 in. from the floor on the axial plane of the nave. Add, on each shorter side of the oblong, an aisle bay measuring 12 ft. ½ in. in the only direction not already determined, i.e. across the aisle, and you have all the elements required to produce the architecture of this Church in its larger features.

The theory of construction here is of the simplest kind. A roof was wanted which should furnish on its upper side a flat floor for the storey above; therefore the vaults of nave and aisles alike, though built over spaces of different size and proportion, must all reach, without exceeding, one crowning level. That level determined the height by which the upper of the two original semi-circular arches, built from capital to capital across the central nave, rose over the other, and, as soon as this was actually attained, all the rest followed, as it were, mechanically and of course. The vaults at Badia a Settimo might be described as vaults of *penetration:* the result of the intersection of semi-cylinders with the pointed vaults which alone could reach the same vertex when raised over the shorter sides of the original oblong. It is better to consider them as vaults of *projection* where the original semi-cylinder that begins to roof the nave grows forward over the bay, but turns as it grows, course by course, from the lowest upwards, running at right angles where it meets the vertical plane of the diagonal, so that the last and highest lies no higher than it did in its first direction, and reaches no further than the axial plane of the

Badia a Settimo

Interior of ancient Church

cross bay. This turning movement of the vaulting courses has only to be repeated along the further groin under the new conditions imposed by the last element, the breadth of the aisle, and lo, the whole church is roofed, the nave by the combination of semicircular and pointed vaults, the aisles by the union of the pointed vault in its two forms. But that which is original here is the semicircle of the nave, which, given the determined spacing assigned to the cross-bays and aisles, if it spread at all, must, as it grows forward and turns one corner after another, automatically result in the pointed vaults of two forms which combine with its own semicylinder to complete the whole system.

The value of such a view lies in the light it throws on the constructive methods employed. In material, being built of brick, the Settimo vaults borrow from Byzantium, but for the rest they are purely Italian, as the disposition of the material shows at once. The bricks are long and thin, measuring, in mean, 1 ft. in length by 5 in. broad and 1½ in. deep. In the vaults they lie with their length along planes radial to the axis of the vault—the Roman way—which assures us that centering was used here, and not dispensed with as in the Byzantine practice. The length of a brick—12 in.—determined the depth of the doubleaux arches, both circular and pointed. For these the centering was accurately framed, and from them it was moved forward to follow and support the successive growth of the vaults till they met in the centre of the spaces. The set-back upon the *abaci* where the doubleaux spring—about two inches—represents the rest found there by the centering in its first position. As it moved forward, loose bricks were no doubt laid on its *extrados*, as in the facile Italian practice of to-day, to keep the vaulting higher and wider than the curve of the *arcs doubleaux*. The groin, whether in nave or aisle, we may believe gave the builders no thought at all, for it was not planned or studied in any way; it simply found itself from the conditions, and resulted, under the builder's hand, by the successive application of the straight-edge and square to each course as that sought and met the plane of the diagonal. The irregularities observable in the building furnish abundant proof that just

some such rough and ready method must have been followed in its construction.

To sum up, this architectural whole must have been one of distinguished lightness and grace, considering that it belongs to the first half of the eleventh century. The stone columns, little more than 1 ft. in diameter, were 15 ft. in height from base to *abacus*. On these rested a vaulting system, of brick to reduce its weight, and rising everywhere in nave and aisles alike to a height of 7 ft. 3 in. above the *abaci*. The vaults, where they abut on the walls, are carried by wall arches, of course of pointed form. The transverse *arcs doubleaux* of the aisles spring on the outer side from stone wall brackets corresponding with the column capitals. Beneath these brackets the groin has begun to develop a separate support of its own, in a kind of corner bracket of rubbed brick which soon dies away into the wall face. It is a logical, distinct, and fascinating scheme which the builders here present to us.

We have ventured to call it the local Tuscan building of these times, and not without reason. The monks of the day at Settimo were Clugniac, and the problem of vaulting Churches on comparatively slender supports, as here, was one that Clugny, now or later, knew well and solved in its own distinguished way. But, in spite of probabilities, that way is not what we find adopted in this place. Clugny thought of the diagonal—it was the first step taken towards the true Gothic—and, placing a semicircular arch in this plane, accommodated the longitudinal and transverse arches of the bay as best it could; stilting them if semicircular, or using the pointed form, but in either case with such moderation that, to reach the height already gained on the diagonal, considerable doming was necessary in the vault-surfaces. At Settimo, on the contrary, the determinating factor of height is attained at once by the semicircular transverse arch, and that of the diagonal is not thought of, but simply finds itself as the segment of an ellipse. Nor is there doming in the vaults; their crowns falling everywhere on horizontal axial lines throughout the whole building—a relic of ancient Roman practice. Clugny, in the twelfth century at least, was fairly on the way to true Gothic. Settimo in the eleventh is chiefly remarkable

for a building of considerable size and beauty, where both aisles, and even the Nave itself in its transverse bays, are all vaulted on the pointed arch without a trace of true Gothic feeling. For these arches, whether in their narrower or wider pointed form, were not chosen but evolved, as we have seen, from the projection of the round arch over certain spaces whose size was determined by convenience. Yet, just because these forms were so evolved here, this example of their occurrence ought to prove supremely interesting. The Gothic fire of the next age, which Italy never fully caught, fed on material that was thus furnished. The inspiration of the great Cathedral builders of France need not be sought at Settimo; for what we can tell it was all their own. But here at least may be seen the forms to which they were to bring new life, and seen emerging, original and inevitable, the authentic creatures of the Romanesque under certain conditions of use. That these forms were vital, even from the first, is proved by their giving rise at once to the groin-brackets of the aisles. Clearly the composite column was not far off, nor that attention to the groin itself, which provided it with a permanent centering in the shape of a rib, and so laid the true foundation of Gothic architecture.

Hardly was this building completed when Settimo, in 1068, became the scene of an event the importance of which in the early history of Florence it would be hard to exaggerate. To understand the full meaning of what took place we must retrace, however briefly, the story of some fifty preceding years. In 1020 the Bishop of the See was Ildebrando, and the ruling spirit of the diocese was the Bishop's wife Alberga, a meddlesome and masterful woman, if we are to trust certain, perhaps prejudiced, accounts of her activity. For these were the days when a strong sentiment in favour of clerical celibacy was steadily rising. Settimo took part in the protest through her Abbot Guarino, who is said to have sought the Bishop in order to remonstrate with him. He was received at the Palace, however, not by Ildebrando, but by Alberga, whom he denounced before he departed, shaking the dust from his shoes against that house and the woman who ruled it. His zeal was contagious, and it burned in a less doubtful cause when another

monk, Teuzzo by name, filled the streets of Florence with protests against simony. These rose higher, and reached a definite mark, when Pietro Mezzabarba was consecrated to the See. Teuzzo and San Giovanni Gualberto, followed by the whole Vallombrosian Order, held that this Bishop had bought his place, and protested that his consecration was therefore null and void. On the other side stood the great authority of Saint Peter Damian, sent hither by the Pope on purpose to defend his namesake. There was need of peace, indeed, for actual war had begun in a night assault on the Convent of San Salvi, and the secular Clergy were in open rebellion; complaining that if they stood by their Bishop the people would not receive the Sacraments at their hands. The question in dispute was urgent therefore, and if not resolved might lead to schism or civil war.

These, then, were the circumstances in which San Giovanni Gualberto proposed the ordeal called the Prova di Fuoco. His friend Conte Guglielmo Bulgaro offered for this purpose a field on his property at Settimo closely adjoining the Badia. In the Badia itself a champion was ready; a monk called Peter, of the Aldobrandeschi family, and so a relation in some degree of the Conte Guglielmo, for the Cadolinghi and Aldobrandeschi were cousins. Pietro Aldobrandeschi would pass through the fire unhurt, and by so doing would prove that the other Pietro—Mezzabarba—was no true Bishop, but, as Teuzzo and San Giovanni Gualberto said, an accursed simoniac.

On the first Wednesday in Lent—the thirteenth of February that year of 1068—the memorable scene took place. On free ground between the walls of the Badia and its outstanding Campanile, two *cataste*—great waggon-loads—of wood had been arranged in a double pile, leaving a passage between that was carefully covered with dry wood above. The heaps of wood reached shoulder high on each side; the way between was but ell-wide, and, the dry roof once fired and fallen in, would offer a pavement of glowing firebrands between walls that still sang with flame. Thus ordered, the test seemed all that could be desired.

Yet the Bishop had refused it. In answer to the challenge of

Gualberto and the offer of the monk Pietro he had obtained the publication of a civil edict warning Florence that whoso called his authority in question should be dragged before the Magistrate; that the goods of fugitives should be confiscated, and all rebellious priests put to the Ban of the Empire. Some Clergy had already taken armed refuge in one of the city Churches. These now fled to Settimo for shelter. The Bishop was formally summoned to be present at the Prova di Fuoco; he refused, but the city, to the number, it is said, of eight or ten thousand people, went out to see the great sight.

In preparation for the ordeal the Convent had spent Monday and Tuesday in special devotions ordered by the Abbot. On the morning of Wednesday, the fatal day, Mass was sung, probably in the very building whose architecture we have studied. At the "Agnus Dei" they set fire to the piles of wood. When Mass was over, the monk Pietro, who had been the Celebrant, removed his chasuble, and then, retaining his other vestments and bearing the Cross, went in procession with the rest of the brotherhood to the field of fire. The grounds of dispute were then read; Pietro solemnly crossed himself, and so passed unhurt amid the flames, whose fiery breath—one observer says—lifted the locks about his tonsure, but left even the hair on his feet unscorched. The people, breathless first then hoarse in acclamation, pressed near and forcibly hindered his return, when Peter—thenceforward San Pietro Igneo—would have gone back by the very way he came. A letter giving account of the whole matter was then drawn up and despatched to the Pope in name of the "Clergy and People of Florence." Besides the details already given, this document is of capital importance in any study of Florentine forms, as it expressly acquaints us with the persons of the *Podestà*—no doubt the Duca Goffredo of Tuscany—the *Preses*—probably his representative in Florence—and the *Municipale Presidium*, or Court where that power gave its decisions in form of Law. Ere we consider these political matters more closely, let us see the immediate consequences of the Prova di Fuoco itself. The Pope was forced to yield; the party of San Giovanni Gualberto triumphed, and Pietro

Mezzabarba of Pavia, hitherto Bishop of Florence, left that See in disgrace to end his days in a Convent.

Now let us confess that, at first sight, this whole story, both of the Ordeal itself and of the incidents which led up to it, wears a religious rather than a political complexion. The questions in debate—celibacy and simony—are questions of ecclesiastical morality; the persons engaged are mostly prominent Churchmen, nay, the classical document in the case, the famous letter of 1068, is addressed to the Pope in name of the "Clerus et Populus Florentinus," the formal title of the electorate of the Diocese with whom, at least in early times, had lain the choice of a Bishop to fill the See. Appearances are proverbially deceptive, however, and some attention spent on the matter will discover, beneath what looks so unlikely, a conflict substantially political, ready to give birth to a new development of the State.

First of all we must once more recall the great commonplace of the Middle Age, as it may be called, namely, that the separation between Church and State to which our own times have accustomed us was then unknown, simply because non-existent. Church and State were in these days but two alternative functions of the one body politic, which displayed its activity in the one sphere or the other as suited the exigencies of the moment, and so in a kind of dimorphism for which there is perhaps no exact modern equivalent. But this fact is surely enough to impose caution at least upon our judgment of the case of Florence in 1068. May it not be that what we have to do with here is a political cause masking its real nature under the forms of an ecclesiastical quarrel?

The Church in these days was the ground to which the people transferred aspirations and activities which found no room for exercise and development in the political sphere. In the State representative government was unknown. Italy was ruled by a foreign nobility under the feudal system of the Empire; by men that is, of alien race, and neither chosen by those they governed, nor in any way responsible to them. But the Church, with all its corruption, retained at least some relics of its primitive democratic

constitution. The most prominent Minister of the Church, the Bishop, in particular, was still elected more or less freely by the Clergy and people of the diocese. Is it wonderful that men who could vote to purpose nowhere else, should be found pouring all the passion of a suppressed political instinct through this, the only channel as yet open for its expression?

Even so we have not come fully in sight of the whole situation. Perhaps very much in consequence of this repression on the one side and opportunity on the other, the Church, where alone the political instinct found scope, had become mundane; a kingdom of this world. The time of which we write was a time of transition, and the new forces at work, and the new forms presently to appear, are now found half disguised under the appearance of religious impulse and ecclesiastical action and result. The power of the Bishop in these days made him important, civilly as well as spiritually. His election bore a civil complexion therefore, and those who took part in it exercised a right indistinguishable, on the one side at least, from that belonging to the political voter. The Ecclesiastical was the only Government of the day which could even pretend to be widely representative of the people's will.

Now this view throws a new light on the urgent questions of the eleventh century—the celibacy of the clergy and their freedom from the sin of Simony. Nothing could seem more purely moral than the latter, nothing more narrowly ecclesiastical than the former. No doubt either that it was on moral and ecclesiastical grounds that great Churchmen—such as San Giovanni Gualberto—opened the crusade of the century against a married priesthood, and against those priests found guilty of attempting to buy the gift of God with filthy lucre. But when we examine the case of the people, and ask where those champions of celibacy and purity got their following, nay, would know whence came that powerful popular support which brought success, the matter wears another appearance. Here political interest was clearly at the root of the movement for reform. The people were not hopeless on whom the yoke of feudal oppression lay so heavily; their hearts were not dead within them. Light had begun to break, and the possibility

of a brighter future to open its promise. Was it wonderful that of two things then they were resolved; that the votes there were to be given should not be bought, and that the man elected to his lifetime of power should be childless; lest, in the sphere of the Church as of the State, dignity should humbly wait on inheritance, and so a worse, because final, feudalism make the heavens as brass above the earth already bound with feudal iron? We may be sure this was the real meaning of the movement, from the popular side at least: it embodied a political sense and sentiment all the more powerful, because in all else denied and repressed.

What put the last edge on this spirit was the growing assertion of the aristocratic principle in the Church itself. The primitive electoral college of the diocese had consisted of the clergy and people without distinction of rank: the Church thus acting on the sound and simple maxim "nullus invitis detur Episcopus." The Council of A.D. 365 at Laodicæa—ominous name—took the first step in the direction of restricting the lay electorate, and transferring the chief voting power to persons of distinction, the *honorati*, *nobiles* or *curiales* of the See. Made part of the law of the Empire by Justinian, we cannot doubt that this new arrangement of the ecclesiastical electorate had long been in force at Florence, though no doubt, there as elsewhere, the clergy and people retained the right of expressing or withholding their assent when the election took place. But if this was so, then a new light falls on the letter of 1068. Those who wrote it in plaint and triumph are the *clerus et populus*, the primitive electorate, and their opponents therefore can be none other than the *nobiles* or *curiales* of Florence; first the Duke Goffredo, and with him his local representative the Preses of Florence, and the Court there. It is clearly a political, nay, a social, even a racial cleavage that here presents itself, from which, in the famous letter, the primitive electorate of the diocese emerges, declaring itself as an independent democratic party on ground that in the modern sense of the word is civil even more than ecclesiastical.

The same result appears, if we consider the definite charge of Simony brought against the Bishop, and held proved by the ordeal

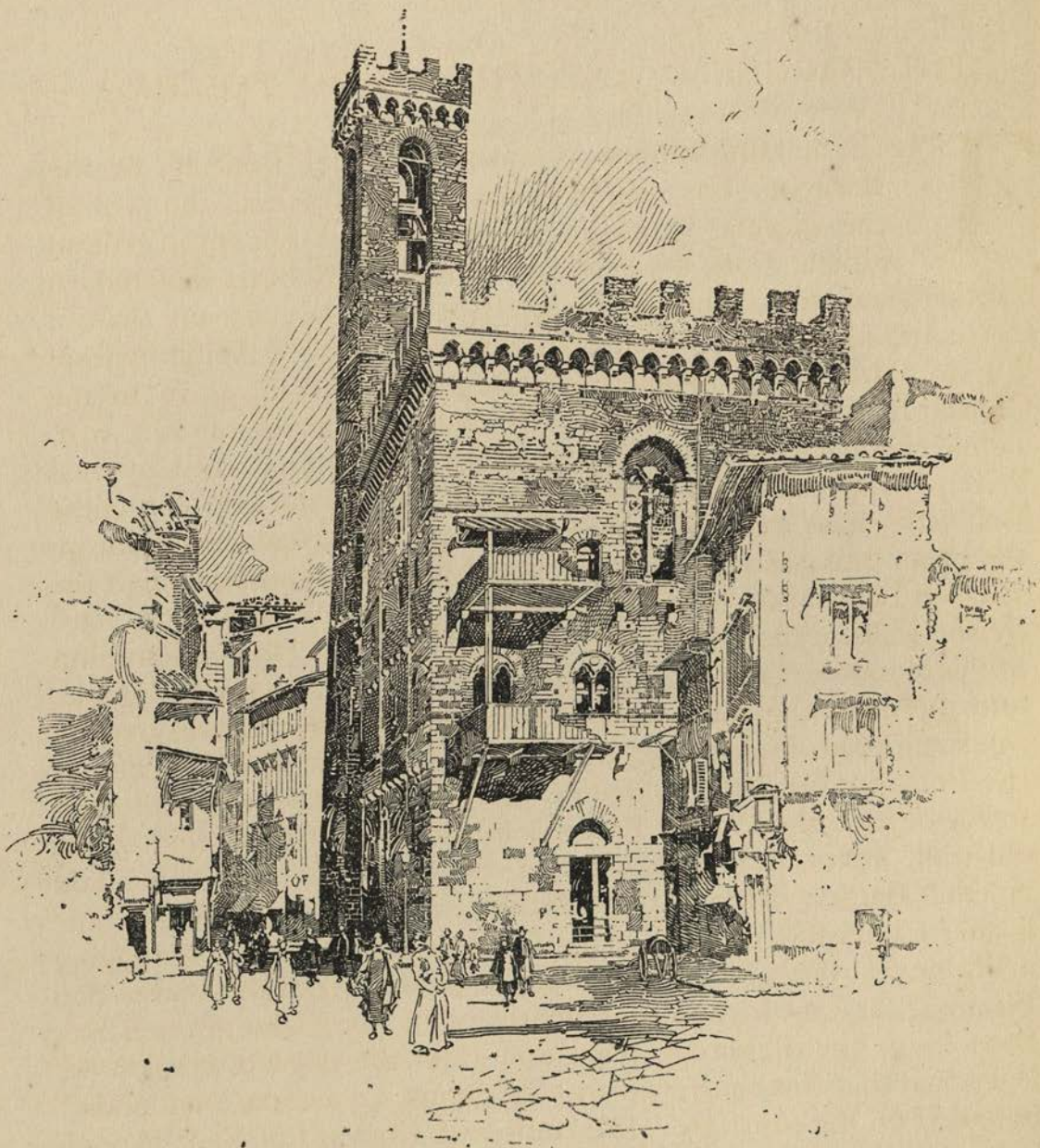
at Settimo. Simony, we must remember, was a sin which could be committed in two ways, either by offering money to obtain spiritual place, or by accepting it for the performance of services which such place made possible. What if Simony in both kinds were charged against Pietro Mezzabarba? The clergy may have denounced him for obtaining his election to Florence by corrupt means; the people because, as Bishop, he had allowed himself to be corrupted, bought over to serve in his place as head of the diocese the class interests of the aristocracy whose creature he thus became. Certain it is that in fact he belonged to that party to whom he appealed when the first discontents showed themselves. Equally certain is it that he did not appeal in vain; witness the civil edict in his favour which issued from the Court of the Curiales. There is evidence of an understanding here which Florence interpreted as a bargain, and so resented as the betrayal of the popular interest for money.

If further confirmation of the political character of this moment and dispute were needful, it might readily be found in the armed force employed on both sides for its resolution. At the back of the Duke's Curia was an executive, the armed hand ready to "drag," as the edict said, all offenders before its bar. On the other part San Salvi resisted with force; some of the Clergy gathered to defend themselves in San Pietro, or sought refuge at Settimo where the Count was their friend; and the very fact that an ordeal was necessary shows how impotent the ruling party was to subdue such rebellion by force of arms. Only the Prova di Fuoco could decide where lay the right in that drawn battle.

How the decision fell we know. An answering force went out from Settimo before which Rome bowed, and the Potestas, Preses and Curia of Florence gave back, to take, for the brief term of their remaining power, a second place. The people had asserted themselves to purpose and a new State was in the throes of its birth. Force, it will be said, not Form; yet surely in this conflict, as we have understood it, the elements of a new world are seen, and not dimly, as they struggle into shape and promise to determine the leading lines of the coming political development.

The new State of Florence, if we have read its signs aright, will be elective, representative, democratic, and forceful; able to hold its own with the armed hand if necessary, against all those powers of the past which may still seek to fetter its progress. And just such in fact is the State which, fifty years later, the first authentic and connected historical documents present to us in the Consular government of Florence. The Magistrates are no longer hereditary nobles, or the nominees of such as once wielded in their name the power of life and death; they are the freely elected representatives of the people, and the force of the new Republic which marches to break the remains of feudal power in the castles of the Contado is but the development, ordered, self-conscious and confident, of that which in 1068 bade the Duke's men give back, and cleared the ring for the decisive Prova di Fuoco.

In after times, when the Cistercians were settled in the room of the Benedictines at Settimo, this Convent developed its relation to the Republic by giving to Florence, as the Mother-house of San Galgano did to Siena, capable men of business, who managed the revenues of the City and held her Seal of State. And it was but fitting that, later still, Florence should cast her mantle over the place, as she did in the fourteenth century, when walls and battlements built by the State made of Settimo a Convent set in the frame of a fortress. Yet neither this earlier service nor later defence did more than strengthen a bond already ancient. Settimo was the birthplace of Florence in a political sense, the cradle where the forces that formed the Republic gave their first signs of articulate life on that memorable Wednesday of Lent in 1068. The triumphant issue of Pietro Aldobrandeschi from the Ordeal was symbolic of the first appearance of a power fresh from fiery trial, and stronger than any opposing force; the power to which the future of Florence and of Italy alike belonged.



The Bargello.

CHAPTER II

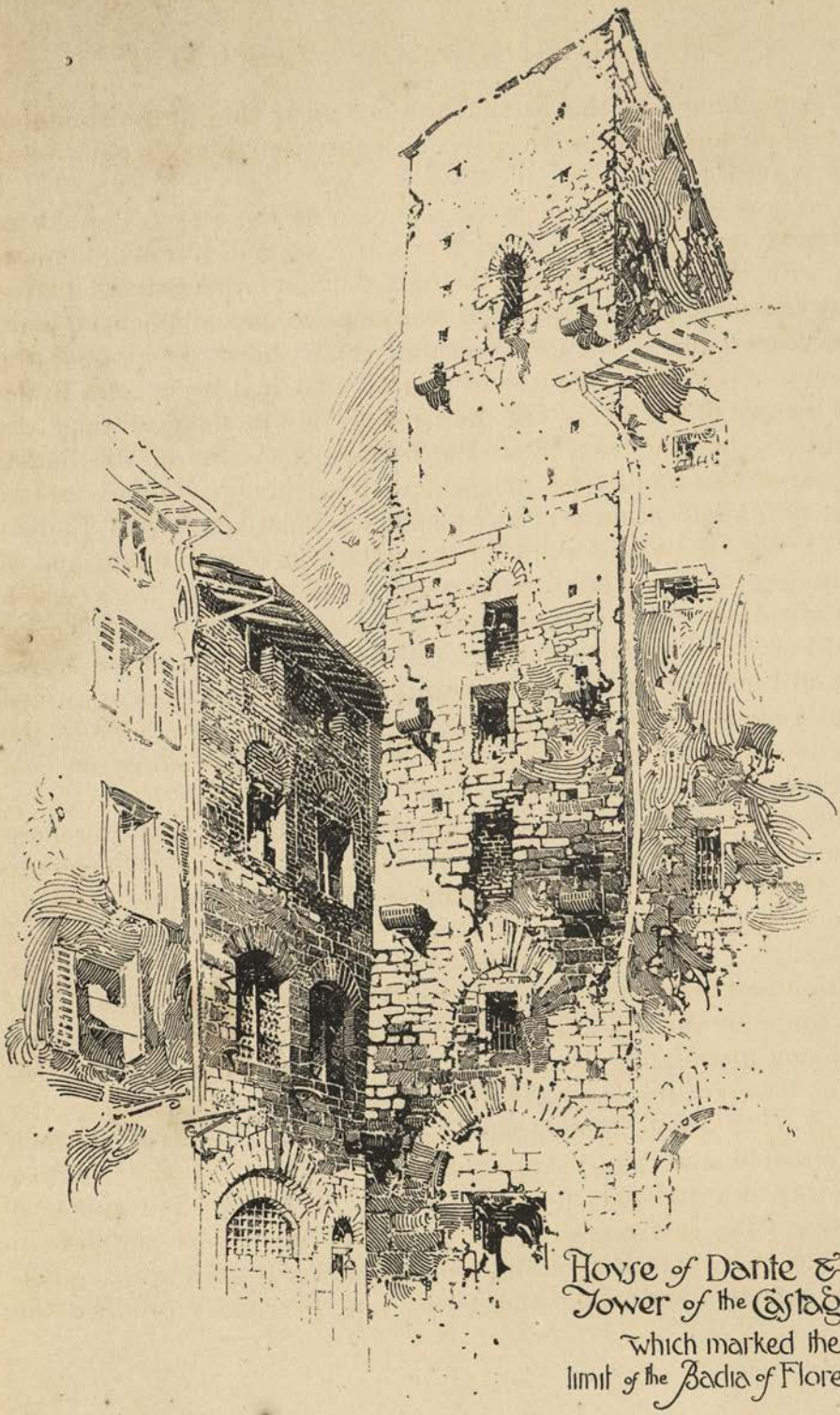
THE BARGELLO AND THE PRIMO POPOLO

THE building known as the Palazzo del Podestà, or the Bargello, was originally erected to serve as the seat of the popular party in the State, and occupies ground which, from a very early period, had been devoted to ecclesiastical use. The Marchese Bonifazio of Tuscany had a Corte and lands here, which passed to his daughter Willa, wife of Uberto, Marchese of Spoleto. This property Willa gave to the Church by founding on this site the Badia of Florence in A.D. 979, as her own deed says : "Wherefore I, in God's Name, the Countess Willa, living under Salic Law, the daughter of the late Marchese Bonifazio, have thought well for my soul's weal, and have built on the ground that is mine, a Church and Monastery in honour of the Blessed Saint Mary ever Virgin, within the City of Florence, hard by the walls of the same," etc. Thus, before the close of the first millennium the Corte of Willa had become the Cloister of the Badia, and the adjoining lands beyond the city walls were made over to the same pious foundation. There was a gate in the walls here—the Porta or Postierla Salomone—and just outside it to the eastward, beyond the Via del Proconsolo which follows the line of the old wall, stood, from early times, two country churches dependent on the Badia. These were SS. Procolo and Appollinare, the former still visible in the Via dei Giraldi, and the latter occupying a site now covered by the buildings at the corner of the Piazza San Firenze. It was Bishop Mezzabarba of ill fame who granted San Procolo to the Badia in 1065, and from the deed of cession we learn that this church carried with it "houses, pastures, and lands," bounded on the south by "the lands and vineyard of Sant' Appollinare." Now the Bargello stands midway between SS. Procolo

and Appollinare, so that we have thus a clear view of the condition of this site some two hundred years before the people's palace was built upon it.

The new form of Government, known as the Primo Popolo, of which we must presently treat, arose in 1250, and it was in connection with this change in the balance of Florentine parties that a home for the popular magistracy was planned and commenced here. Five years later, a document occurs which shows us at once the measure of progress made, and relates what had been done to the past history of the site. On the 31st of July in the year 1255, the Commune bought from Don Bartolommeo, Abbot of the Badia, nine *panora* of land, "positi in vinea olim Abbatiæ Florentinæ . . . super quo hedificatum est, pro particula, Palatium Populi Florentini." We are then to think of the palace as already built, and as occupying in part land belonging to the Badia, from which religious house this new purchase was made evidently with a view of adding to the civic building. From 1250, while these works were still in progress, the magistrates for whom they were destined found a home in the buildings of the Badia itself; perhaps in the ancient tower of the "Castagna," which still looks down on San Martino.

The piece of the Abbey vineyard was not the only purchase made for the extension of the new palace in 1255. From the 21st January onwards the Commune was buying houses here to the number of eighteen or twenty; including several towers, a "palazzo"—that of the Boscoli—and divers pieces of land. The situation and boundaries of these, as given in the deeds, show us not only that the various churchmen concerned here had in the past feued out their lands extensively to private families, but that an *insula* covered by irregular buildings had arisen on this site, pierced by a street or lane running from north to south between San Procolo and Sant' Appollinare. On the west side of this stood the original palace of the people begun in 1250 and now complete; the rest was destined, from the time of its purchase in 1255, for the extension of the palace eastwards in a great quadrangle which should take the place, and perhaps reproduce the



House of Dante &
Tower of the Castagna
which marked the N.W.
limit of the Badia of Florence

general form, of the former *insula*. The inscription dated 1255, still visible at the S.W. corner of the building, confirms us in this view of the relation between its first beginning and subsequent progress. In 1282 we find the Podestà, who had fixed his seat here ever since the Ghibelline reaction of 1260, assembling the Council of the Capitudini on the terrazza of the first floor, before the door of the great hall: a sign that the quadrangle was probably complete, though not—at least in the upper storeys—in the form it now shows. The terrazza, for example, was not vaulted, and Villani tells us that the stair rose, not as now from the cortile, but from the street-front in the Via del Proconsolo. The window next the corner, plainer than the rest, is what remains of the doorway of these early days; it opened on the great hall from the head of this stair.

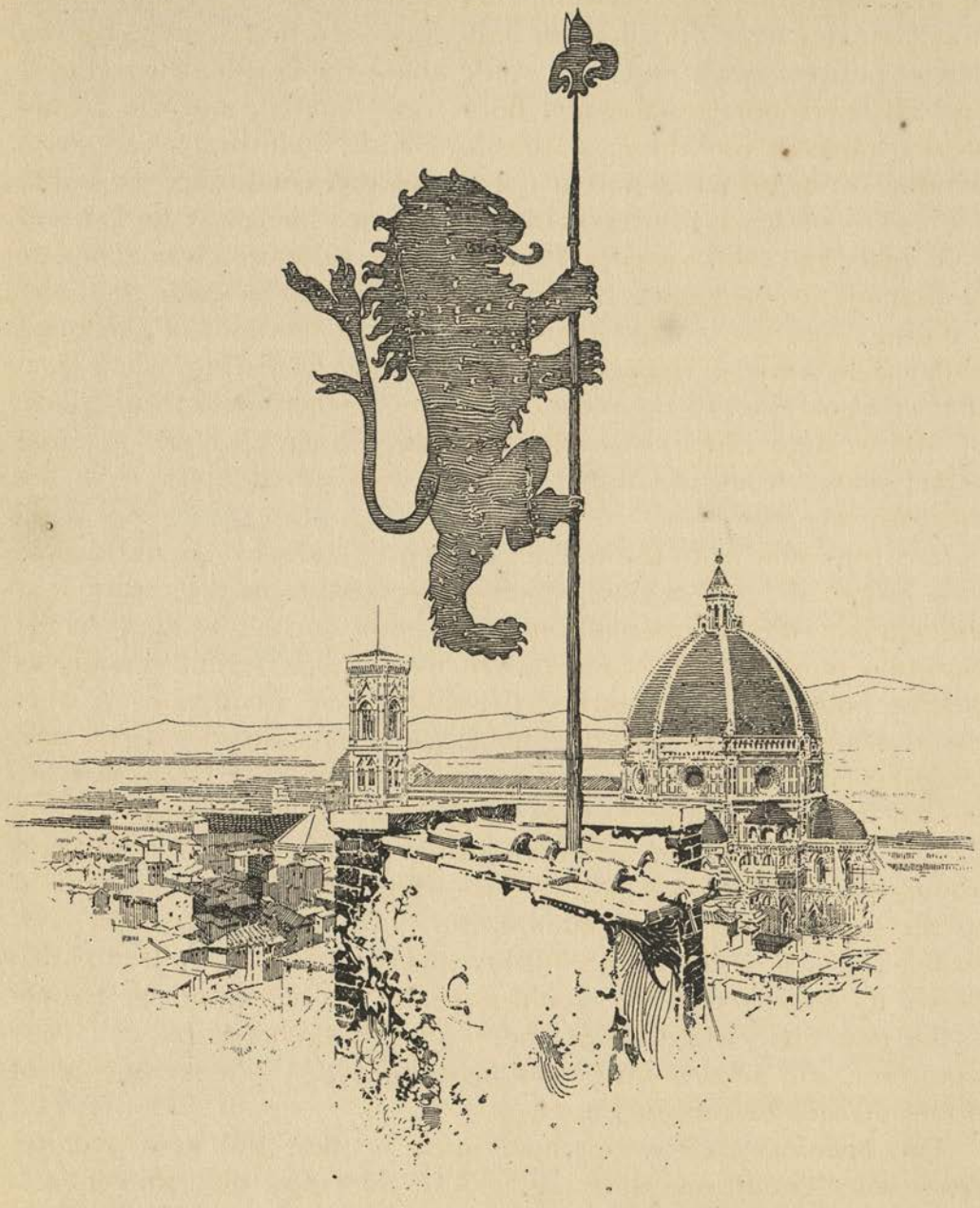
Changes of lesser importance were made here in 1292 and 1319, which we may neglect for the sake of passing more quickly to the period which brought this palace to a state fairly enough represented by its present appearance. Fire and flood ushered in this new development by imposing the necessity of reconstruction. On the 28th of February, 1332, the roof of the building raised in 1250 was destroyed by the flames, which spread eastward through the upper storeys surrounding the cortile till all was blackened ruin above the level of the Loggia. In the month of November following, the great flood of 1333 completed what the fire had begun by rising here to the height of six braccia. Roofs and upper floors were gone; walls cracked and calcined; frescoes smoked or destroyed by damp, and there was need not only of thorough restoration, but of extensive rebuilding on lines which should provide against further risk of fire. Villani tells us that the Commune thereupon resolved to vault the upper as well as the lower building that this risk might be avoided.

Hence the new works, completed about the year 1345, which Vasari ascribes to Agnolo Gaddi, but which the documents show to have been carried out under the eye of Neri di Fioravante. The walls of the original building of 1250 were now carried higher and crowned with machicolated battlements. The tower at the N.W.

angle was correspondingly raised and crowned at its present height of fifty-seven braccia. Within, the vaults of the great hall on the first floor, for which head-room had thus been found, were thrown across between wall and wall, while about the cortile, the terrazza, and all the rooms on the first floor were vaulted, and the second storey raised over them. Agnolo Gaddi built the great south window of the principal hall in 1345, Giovanni Gualberto, the smith, set his lion of wrought iron on the Volognana—the great angle tower—in 1346, and next year the rebuilding or restoration was complete in that of the principal stair, now made to climb beside the older building from the cortile to the terrazza at the door of the great hall. The work of these later years is sharply distinguished from that of 1250, even to the most careless eye, where the string-course of the western block separates the lower finer masonry in large hewn stones from the upper coarser wall raised upon it in the fourteenth century.

It is time that from the tedium of these details we should escape to a larger air, and a view which may reveal to us the meaning of the whole. We have already noted (p. 86) that the building of the Bargello in 1250 had extraordinary importance, architecturally as well as politically. It marked the time when private towers were cut down to the height of fifty braccia prescribed by the new building-law; their stones being used to raise the walls that defended the Oltr' Arno. It thus opened that period of architectural progress by which the primitive tower-group, built at haphazard about the *insula*, lost, perforce, its irregularity above; submitted to the new feature of a common roof, now become necessary, and so began to show the appearance of the later *palazzo*. But if this be so, it remains that we should ask how the Palace of the People—the new civic building of the day—related itself to what was going on, and what contribution it brought to this development of domestic architecture in Florence.

The opening observation here must be that the new building rose under conditions differing widely from any that affected the owners of private property in Florence. It is true that the site chosen by the city for its palace was, as we have seen, an *insula*,



The Lion of Palazzo Podestà.

indistinguishable from the rest of the building-blocks of which Florence was composed—a little freer, perhaps, as lying outside the limit of the older wall, and admitting the neighbourhood of the Church vineyard, but, for the rest, covered closely enough by some twenty houses and towers, which the public Authority acquired. Here, however, the resemblance begins and ends. Public money in a sufficient sum was available to meet the needs of the case without curious contrivance such as private owners were bound to. And these needs were comparatively simple, for what had to be arranged was, not the shelter of many families with more or less separate interests under a common roof, but a lodging for one—that of the chief popular Magistrate—in due dignity, and with ample space to receive the assemblies of Council and of State over which his position called him to preside. Hence, then, in its larger features, the first building of 1250. This consisted of three storeys: the ground floor, probably given up to offices; the first accommodating the great hall of Council; and the second—destroyed in the fire of 1332—containing, it is likely, the lodging of the Magistrate with his family and following. All was covered by a wooden roof with far-spreading eaves, the new architectural feature of the day, and one which proved, not here alone, but elsewhere throughout the city, a real danger from its ready inflammability.

Returning to details, however, we find that the People's Palace was not so entirely free from antecedent conditions and habits as to show no trace of these in its construction. The site on which it rose in 1250 was limited, on the west by a free space of road or piazza between it and the old wall; on the east by the *vicolo* piercing the *insula*, and putting San Procolo in direct communication with Sant' Appollinare. The sides of the space thus sharply delimited were not parallel, and neither ran at right angles to the northern side of the Piazza Sant' Appollinare, the southern limit of the site. Such irregularities have set their stamp upon the building, and are very visible to-day, especially in the hall on the ground floor, where the spacing corresponds with their unequal measures, and the vaults that run from west to east open out as they go, passing from sharply pointed arches—their first wall-form—to that of an erect

semi-ellipse on the axis of the hall, and ending against the east wall in shapes but little removed from that of the semicircle. This latter wall, there can be little doubt, marks either the actual line of the ancient *vicolo*, or one closely parallel to it.

We have said that the architectural changes in Florence, brought about by the new building law, stretched a common roof over composite groups of diminished towers, leaving untouched their structure up to the legal limit of fifty braccia, and we have contrasted with this the Bargello roof of 1255, which covered walls built in five years on a new and consistent plan, from ground that civic funds had bought outright and cleared of existing building. But though this contrast is true in the main it must not be held as absolute. A document has been found, dated 22nd October, 1344, in which Giovanna, widow of Ciampolo Cavalcanti, gives a lease of her shop "under the Palace of the Podestà of Florence" to Maso di Bindo Adatti. And the "Volognana" itself, the great angle-tower of the building, whether we believe, with Passerini, that it can safely be identified with that of the Riccomanni, bought by the Commune in March, 1255, or not, is evidently, in its lower storeys at least, an older structure than the Bargello itself. The ground for the new Palace was thus not yet wholly cleared, and the building as it rose incorporated with itself, in at least two points, the remains of those which had previously occupied the site.

The Volognana, indeed, is responsible for an external feature of the Bargello which does more than any other to connect it, in all its sudden novelty of plan, with the building practice of the past. In our general view of Florentine domestic Architecture we have insisted on the movable wooden galleries which clothed the outer faces of her towers, providing ampler space, air, and street-view for their cribbed and cabined inhabitants. To this rule the Volognana was no exception, nay, incorporated as it came to be in the body of the Bargello, it brought a living and fertile graft that spread this traditional relief over the whole of the new block erected in 1250–55. Nor is this so singular an operation of the conservative spirit as might be supposed. We are to remember that, even in the primitive *insula*, these galleries were more than an escape, or

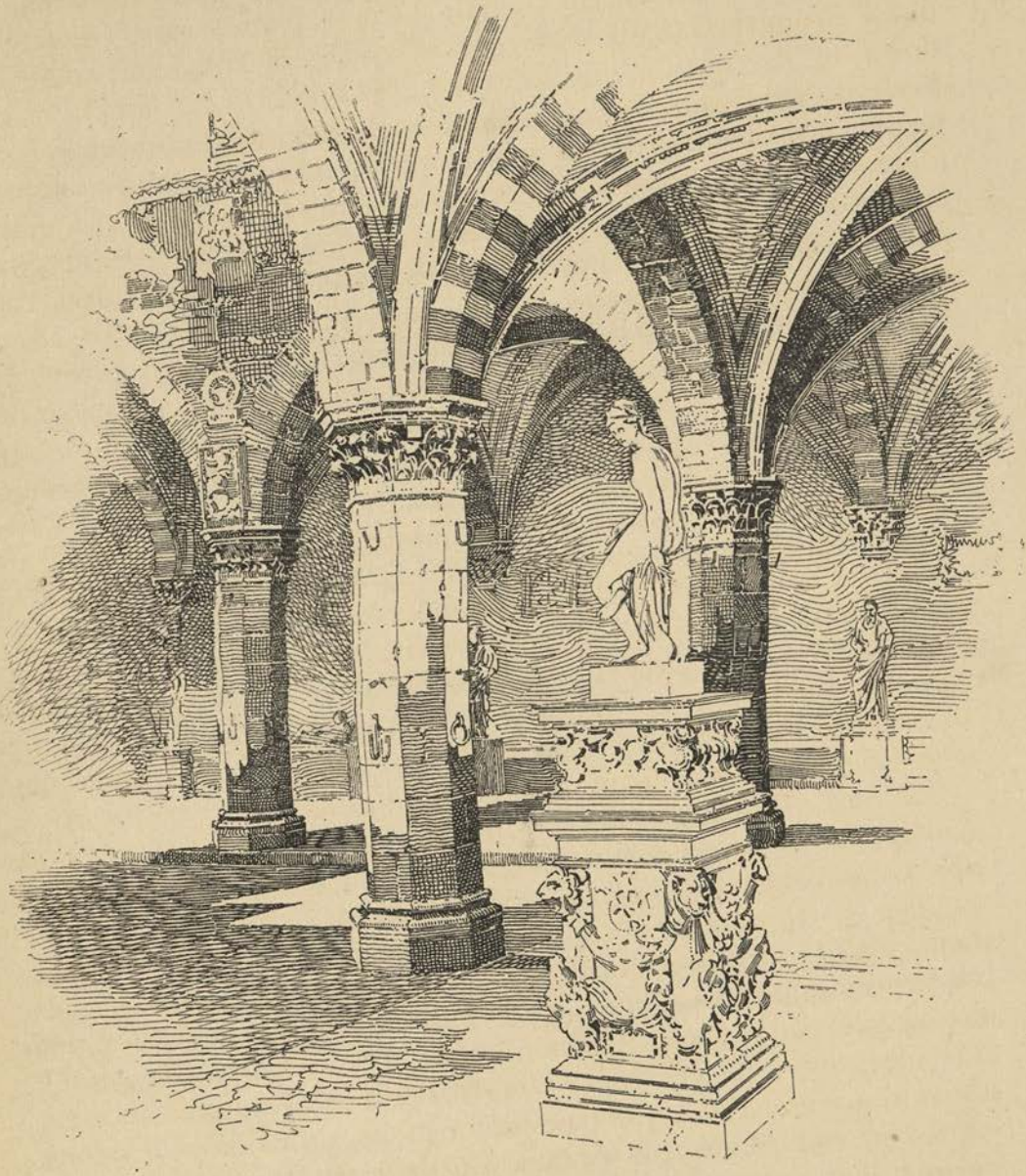
a means of enjoying air, light, and a long street-view. Before the towers were shortened under a common roof; before the type of the later Palazzo thus emerged, such outworks had already begun to make the separate towers of the *insula* something of a unity; they were a private passage by which the different households of one family-group could easily communicate with each other, while living for the rest, each in the seclusion of its own dwelling. So, when the new unity of the Bargello appeared in a form fully structural, it was but natural that the palace of 1250 should wear the external sign of that makeshift for full intercommunication in which earlier times had anticipated the progress of the building art and the needs of a later day.

To some this view will seem fanciful, and they may be advised to study the real meaning of the Bargello galleries on the spot. We have said (p. 76) that, as contrived for the earlier towers, the use of these outworks was chiefly domestic, occasionally festal, rarely or never were they adopted for defence; that, on the contrary, every tower crowned with permanent machicolations in stone was stripped of its galleries ere it went into action that projectiles might be hurled from its full height, and fall with utmost and unbroken force upon its assailants. Now the Bargello as first built was of no great height—we can see its limit above to-day, where the dressed stones stop—and, what is of more consequence, the circumstance of 1332, in the fire which spread from this building to those surrounding the cortile, teaches us that, in all probability, it was covered in the new fashion of the day, with a wide-eaved wooden roof. Here, then, were no stone battlements frowning over the open approach, and hence the natural provision of wooden galleries after the time-honoured Florentine fashion, though for another purpose. They were not needed for passage, as in the tower-groups, for the Magistrate and his family had the whole wide space of the palace interior at their disposal, and so could easily communicate with each other. But as a means of defence they were essential, and the event proved that the builders of the Bargello did well to provide them. Again and again, in 1295, in 1304, in 1343, in 1378 —to inquire no further—the waves of popular fury broke in armed

anger under these dark walls; now repulsed, now successful, but always constrained to reckon with the movable bulwarks they threw out. From the last of these assaults a significant detail has come down to us, for the old account says that "the family of the Podestà, who were on the tower, began to cast stones upon the people and the artisans who were there." It was thus that men fought from the houses of old Florence, and as to the Bargello, the Volognana formed its principal vantage, where height gave force to hand-launched missiles. For the rest of the palace, frequent references to its *arnesi*—its store of cross-bows, etc.—show how the defenders used an artificial force in their artillery when obliged to fight from the less advantageous ground of the lower galleries that girdled the whole. In the wild times of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries no important building not thus provided could be considered complete.

Having thus seen the general nature of such outworks, and noticed the particular case of the Bargello which imposed them here as a necessary means of defence, we may now study the matter of these wooden galleries more in detail. The putlog-holes contrived for their support still remain, and thus, though the galleries themselves are no longer to be seen, a little attention enables us to reconstruct with tolerable certainty the general system in which they were applied to this building.

We begin with the angle-tower of the Volognana as more ancient than the rest, and therefore the undoubted original from which the system was developed over the whole of the adjoining building to the south of it. On the western face of this tower there are four rows of putlog-holes, one above the other; each row consisting of two holes, and each hole furnished with a projecting sill in the shape of a solid and simple stone bracket, which falls into the wall-face below on the profile of a quarter-circle. Above the highest of these pairs of brackets, at a similar distance, stand two stone hooks, if we may call them so, one over each putlog-hole and bracket; and close over these again comes the plain string-course which separates the older part of the tower from its later superstructure, just as a similar course, though set at a much



In the Cortile of the Bargello.

lower level, divides the old work from the new in the adjoining building to the south.

We may read these signs in the following way without much risk of error. The hooks held a horizontal wall-beam, to which were fastened the sloping boards of a pent-house roof made sufficiently watertight, where it met the wall, by the string-course immediately above. The four pairs of putlog-holes took eight short beams that carried four wooden gallery floors, corresponding to the internal storeys of the tower behind, whose irregularly placed windows were the means of exit and entrance between the one and the other. These four galleries were no doubt braced together by uprights of timber, and partially closed in front by some kind of wooden parapet, and the whole was kept rigid and level by a pair of stout struts which brought the lowest gallery front to a bearing on the wall beneath. Putlog-holes for the stepping of these struts in a short wooden bracket are wanting indeed, but as the whole tower basement was recased with stone in 1860, these may well have disappeared in that restoration. And the alternative would leave our reconstruction of the tower galleries on this side intact, save that we should then have to suppose they consisted of three levels and a roof instead of four; the struts in that case finding footing at the lowest visible pair of putlog-holes.

When we pass from the Volognana tower to the adjoining building of 1250, the case appears, at first sight at any rate, less simple of resolution; for here the system of holes is apparently irregular and complicated. A little attention, however, disposes of the difficulty, which is due to the presence in this part of the building of two distinct systems; one consisting of the smaller holes *cut* in the wall, wherever convenient, by those who raised a scaffolding for the rebuilding of the Bargello after the great fire of 1332; the other comprehending the true putlog-holes *left* at regular intervals during the building of the first period. These latter are distinguished by their size as well as their regularity, and by the fact that, except in the lowest row, each, like those already noticed, is furnished below with a cushion bracket, or corbel, in solid stone.

Restricting our attention, then, to the true putlog-holes of the

west and south walls, we find them tell nearly the same story as those of the tower, though within narrower limits imposed by the lesser height of this building. The string-course and stone hooks mark, as before, the presence and place of a wooden pent-house roof. The highest row of bracketed holes indicates a gallery level here; to which access was had from the small upper windows, once those of a second storey lost by the great fire. The next corresponds to one thrown out at the level of the first floor, and the distance between these two shows how high the great hall must have been, even in its earlier state. The lowest row of holes—those without brackets—must have been meant to take the short putlogs in which were stepped the struts that helped to support the whole. Thus we have a double gallery on the main building, as against a system of at least three, and probably four, levels on the tower. This latter probability seems increased when we observe that the lowest row of brackets is continuous at the same level over hall and tower alike, and that only the plain holes are unrepresented in the tower, from which therefore—as we have already surmised—they almost certainly disappeared in the last restoration.

The moment marked by the building of the Bargello is one of the most important in the story of Italian domestic architecture: such is the general conclusion which emerges from the details that have occupied us. The past shows us the gradual progress of the tower-group under constraint of the natural conditions of space, population, and convenience, which prevailed in Florence. Suddenly to these is added the artificial restriction of the new building law; the groups are cut down above, and roofed, and among them appears the first block of the Bargello, built in a new freedom, but reaching voluntarily, and at once, the very type which antecedent and present restrictions had combined to produce. This building in its unconstraint confirms our reading of the past; it marks the moment when unconscious progress towards a definite form under natural conditions, suddenly rose to consciousness under obedience to an artificial law; and when, therefore, the newly discovered type imposed itself even where the conditions and restraints that had produced it were as nearly as possible unfelt. It is the *Palazzo*

that is the result, alike of the demolition and the construction of the day: a type of building discovered in the former, affirmed in the latter, and destined to a long history of increasing development and use.

When we turn, as it is now time to do, from Architecture to History, it is with the expectation of finding, what is indeed the case, that the moment when the Bargello was built had at least as much importance in the political as in the architectural history of Florence. In an earlier chapter we have already (p. 291) noticed the Patarene war of 1245 as the most picturesque feature of what was, in fact, a general reaction of the Guelphs against the Ghibelline party. The Ghibellines, however, did not lose heart or hope; the less indeed that, in 1246, Frederic II gave them a new head in the person of his son Frederic of Antioch, Imperial Vicar of Tuscany, and secretly encouraged the Uberti to rise in rebellion against the party of the Church. Hence much street fighting with uncertain result, till the Imperial Vicar arrived with a strong force of German Lanzknechts, and on Candlemas Day of 1249, the Guelphs yielded to the inevitable, and went into exile from Florence, yet not before, in a kind of sad defiance, they had carried Rustico Marignolli, their dead captain, to his burial in San Lorenzo. So the Ghibellines remained masters of the city, supported in that position by a foreign force.

But again, ere a year had passed, the times changed, and brought a new political situation. The great Emperor died in the south, discovering by his departure the unbroken power of his rival the Pope, ably served in Tuscany by the continued eloquence and influence of Peter of Verona. And, at Florence, that voice and party still found abundant material on which to work; for the exiles of the year before were only the leaders of the Guelph interest, who, at their going, left behind the mass of their followers, whom they still encouraged from their retreat in the castles of the neighbouring Contado. The city, in fact, was subdued, but sullen in its submission to alien force, and all was ready for a change of parties and a new development in the State. The crisis came in October, 1250, when the Florentine people asserted their rights

from a vantage-ground in the houses of the Anchioni, and founded the popular government of that year, known as the *Primo Popolo*. Before we come to details, and examine the new form thus given to the civic institutions, it may be as well to spend some time in gaining a clear view of what was really implied in such a change.

A little thought will show that the State in all essentials is born, and political life, though yet in rudimentary form, begun, wherever men agree to live together in society. Two fundamental reasons seem responsible for this agreement whereby the natural institution of the family begins to produce the artificial association of the State. One of these arises from the need for subsistence, and makes itself felt with the discovery that, by the wise and ordered division of labour, such subsistence can more easily and surely be found. It is but an extension of the natural law already operative in the primitive family, whereby the man is the hunter and the woman tends the fire in his absence, ready to prepare the food he brings home. But game can more surely be provided if men follow it in numbers and order, and the ground more fully made available if, in earing as in harvest, the labourers are many and work together. Hence, then, that grouping of families and forming of rules of life and labour which are the germ of politics in a fully ordered State.

It may be said that the root-motive of such coöperation is fear; the fear of famine, the desire to avoid death by securing the means of subsistence. But there is another fear of death, darker and more urgent, which acts still more powerfully in the way of driving men to understand each other and to combine their forces. "Homo homini lupus"—the beasts of prey lie in wait for the solitary hunter, hardly for those who follow the chase in companies; and, worst of all because armed with intelligence, is man himself when he becomes a robber and the murderer of his fellows. Red war has a sharper edge than hunger, and the primitive society soon finds that it must organise itself not only for labour but for defence. Here the rule is stricter to meet the urgency of the case, and here again the State appears in primitive shape, but now organised on a military basis.

These two forms of coöperation, for production and defence, are not antagonistic; in fact we have only to follow one step further the ideal progress of civilisation to reach a state of things in which the former implies the latter; demands it indeed as the condition of its own continued existence. Let us suppose that the group of associated families—that tribe which is already in a sort the State—has got rid, as it may well have done, of its first fear. Starvation, it finds, has passed out of the range of practical possibilities, and the coöperation which has assured this happy result is already transcending it. Too much is being produced; more, that is, than is necessary for immediate local needs, and so barter begins, one tribe exchanging its superfluity with another, markets rise, and primitive commerce is on foot. Now it is plain that with the consequent discovery of values a vulnerable point is created on which marauding bands will be only too ready to strike; nay war is in the air for the possession of markets; places and routes assume a new importance, and the community which would extend or even retain its commerce must be prepared to fight, organised then, not only for coöperative production, but for armed defence.

Reflections like these prepare us to resume the thread of early Florentine history where we left it in our last chapter. The popular protest and victory of 1068 had, we remember, issued in the free consular government of the early twelfth century. The city, long organised on a commercial basis, found her trade-routes embarrassed by the aristocracy of the neighbouring castles. Hence a development we now readily understand; this community of artisans and merchants, menaced in the progress of its peculiar life, organises itself on another basis, becomes a host, opens war on the castles, and reducing these to obedience, returns with new hope to its proper function of busy production.

Such change and return are essential features of the case. It is evident that a commercial community, organised for self-defence, will show alternate phases corresponding to the changing circumstances of the times. When its fundamental interests are threatened the call will be to arms, and the military type will

dominate the State; remaining at the head of affairs as long as there is an obstacle which arms may remove, or a new opening for trade which victory may gain. But the original constitution of such a State is and must remain commercial, and when the danger is past and the question comes again to be, not how new opportunities may be opened, but how to utilise those that are present and secure, the fundamental form of the State will reassert itself, and the militant type of government again give place to one more able to express and promote the peculiar life of a mercantile society.

This then is what we see taking place in 1250. The government which then gave way, did so because it had served its time under conditions now no longer existent. A hundred years before, the situation of Florence had been very different. Thanks to earlier wars, the nearer oppression she suffered in her immediate neighbourhood was then at an end, and the nobles of the contado, who had exercised it, were not only conquered but won to dwell within the city walls. Farther afield, however, Florence had still to face impediments to her wider commerce in the rivalry of Pisa, Pistoia, and Siena. Hence the form of government which succeeded that of the Consuls, and persisted to the time at which we are now arrived. For it was not merely that the city availed herself of her resident nobility to form a cavalry arm, or that these new citizens found congenial occupation in training and leading the infantry of the Trades, thus making common cause with their conquerors and entering fully into the life of the place. The Podestà who succeeded the Consuls was a military officer, and under him, for fifty years or more, the State was organised on a military basis, with what reason and success let the story of the wars of Florence tell. Semifonte was taken and razed to the ground; Pisa, Pistoia, and Siena taught their place, and again Florence was free in her further trade by land and sea. Thus the government of the Podestà had justified itself as entirely proper to a commercial community threatened in its wider markets.

But evidently this very success rang-in the inevitable hour of change. Victory had abolished fear, at least for a time, and with

departing fear died also the constraint which had turned Florence for two generations into an armed camp against her trade rivals. How certain then that under these circumstances the native constitution of her State would now prevail; that a new industrial order would affirm its rights against the military constitution so long supreme, but now unfit alone to meet the altered conditions of the time and place.

The details of what was done are highly significant. To begin with, the city committed the arrangement of the new government to thirty-six officers, called Caporali del Popolo, elected by the six districts into which Florence was now divided. In their work of reform these men proceeded, not so much in the way of overturning existing arrangements, but rather by building over against these a corresponding system which should restore the balance of the State and leave the deciding word to be spoken by the representatives of the popular power. A General Council was created consisting of three hundred members, and comprising the Deans of the Trades and Officers of the Civic Companies, and yielding a committee or Special Council of eighty members. These two assemblies were evidently framed to answer to the existing, and persisting, Councils, General and Special, of three hundred and of ninety members respectively. These latter had been, and continued to be, presided over by the Podestà; but now a new official, the Capitano del Popolo, was created over against him as the president of the new Councils; and thus in a special sense the representative of the popular interest. These two principal officers of State, the Podestà continued in his place and the Capitano created in his, held separate and coördinate jurisdiction. Thus there was need still of a central supreme Authority able to command both, and this was provided in the twelve Anziani, of which each *sestiere* elected two; their special Council of thirty-six Buonomini, and the general Parlamento of the city; this last only convened when circumstances of special moment called for decision by the united popular voice.

In the new constitution of the Primo Popolo the mind of Florence was plainly set on moderation and comprehension. The

aristocratic party had served the State too well in the past to miss consideration now. Their dangerous leaders had gone into exile; the party must be reckoned with as a permanent and even useful element of the body-politic, and conciliated in view of the important services it might still render. As such then it continued to be represented by the Podestà, to sit in his Councils, and to form the host of the cavalry which, with archers and crossbowmen, stood at his disposal as an executive force, and formed the flower of the Republican army. This consideration shown for the party they had just ousted from the central seat of power shows the true strength of the Primo Popolo, and serves at the same time to explain a feature of the new Order which at first sight might seem to contradict what we have said of its real nature. For if the city was divided into twenty regiments-at-arms under as many Gonfalonieri who sat in the general council of the people, these foot-soldiers, with the cavaliers whom the Captain brought from abroad in his train, supplied that other executive power without which the representative of the people must have remained helpless in face of the Podestà and his host. Military organisation was a necessity still, but in a new sense, and simply to defend the new-laid basis of power, and to secure that the essentially industrial constitution of the Primo Popolo should not be upset by those who, for reasons of policy, were tolerated within the city walls, and even suffered to retain their former order and the use of arms.

This great change, and more especially the new power created to counterbalance that of the Podestà, found monumental expression in the Palace of the Bargello, built to afford not only sufficient but imposing accommodation for the Capitano del Popolo, and a hall where he might assemble his greater and lesser Council. Such a building was the due affirmation, in solid stone and lime, of the new basis found for the State in this expression of the popular will and power.

The matter does not end here however. In our study of the Bargello from the architectural point of view we have found it affirm a building type—that of the Palace—towards which earlier ages had steadily, though unconsciously, advanced: an affirmation

prepared for and precipitated by the building law of the day. Now this law was a political measure, meant to humble the aristocracy by making their towers, actually as well as metaphorically, bow the head before the new mansion of the people. Thus politics and architecture are here seen in contact; the former acting to produce remarkable results in the province of the latter. It is but a particular case falling under the general rule that the architecture of any time always expresses, more or less aptly, its life and thought. How far this may be true of the Bargello it must now concern us to inquire.

Unconscious tendency towards a type marked the history of Florentine domestic building, and led up to the sudden appearance of this full-formed palace; can it be that something of the same kind was simultaneously at work in the world of Florentine politics? It would certainly seem so when we examine from this point of view the rise and progress of the aristocratic party in the State. These were the men that built the *insulæ*, remember, and who, during the twelfth century, were definitely known in Florence as the "Party of the Towers." They built these towers without preoccupation, according to their means, as money came in or sites fell vacant; built them higher or lower as suited their needs and pockets, nor ever thought what the result was to be, or how, under the careless irregularity of these sky-lines, a new building-form was slowly shaping itself.

Similarly, then, in the State, the same men and party were at work on parallel lines, building in their politics better than they knew and to far other purpose. The party of the Towers reconciled the interests of the noble, the Ghibelline families of Florence, in a common aristocratic cause within the city where they had been forced to dwell. They saw that cause triumph and, counting the place their own at last, brought all their trained and traditional chivalry into the business, fighting for Florence against Pisa, Siena, and Pistoia, and securing her victory in many a distant field. Chivalry and business are words that clash, yet in this case they go well together, for nothing could express the real situation half so pointedly as their juxtaposition here. Business was the foundation

of Florentine life, and while the aristocrats were fighting, the people were at work under that potent shield, providing the merchandise which was to follow the flag and build up the commercial reputation of the city. Thus, very much as the palace grew unseen with the growth of the towers, the success of the tower-dwellers promoted the rise and fortunes of what they hardly knew, or noticed only to despise: a great popular interest and party in the State. Every victory by river or road opened a fresh channel for commerce which Florence hastened to use; gaps in her mercantile order were filled up; the party was consolidated, and its ultimate appearance in open triumph brought near.

Thus the particular provision of 1250 which levelled the towers, and the general regulation of State to which it belonged, form a consistent and intelligible whole. In a moment, by the operation of this sumptuary law, as we may call it, in building, the form of the palace, so long prepared for, at last stood suddenly clear. And, correspondingly, in the political reforms which issued simultaneously with it from the houses of the Anchioni, a form of State in one moment took shape which was new and yet old: new in the revelation of the Primo Popolo as a definite constitution, but old in the preparation by which the popular party had risen from strength to strength till, in the inevitable hour, it came to its open appearance and kingdom in Florence.

Another and final correspondence between these two novelties of the day—political and architectural—appears when we remember that neither was realised in such a form as to exclude the idea of further progress and development. In the political sphere the constitution of 1250 was an evident compromise, an attempt to preserve something at least of the aristocratic government of the Podestà, while controlling it by the new office and power of the Capitano. This arrangement, it may be said frankly, was not one which promised well, especially in the world of arms and of war; and soon was Florence to learn its defects and dangers on the disastrous field of Montaperto, which restored the former order and brought the Podestà to dwell in the Palace that had been built for his rival. Politically, we repeat, the Primo Popolo was an attempt rather than

a solid success; it prepared the way for the wiser policy of 1293, when the popular interest was set on a surer basis. And similarly the Bargello itself marks the open appearance of a great architectural idea which time must yet fashion ere it come to its full development and perfection in the Florentine palace of the great period. Thus, alike in the government of the day and in its chosen seat, we find the city advancing rather than attaining; laying the foundation, ideal and material, for the days to come.

The Bargello is associated not only with the Primo Popolo for whose chief magistrate it was first built, nor with the reaction consequent on Montaperto which brought the Podestà to occupy these halls, but, nearly a century later, with the tyranny of the Duke of Athens, who held Court here till driven forth in 1343 by force of popular indignation. Elsewhere (p. 67) we have seen in the government of the Duke a sign of the close connection between the substantial commerce of Florence and the political form which her institutions assumed. The moment had been one of crisis in the commercial world; credit had fallen with the colossal failures of the Bardi and Peruzzi; politics were deeply involved, intrigues on foot, and, as the result, Florence in a weak moment preferred the Duke to her liberties. In a final word let us now sum up the real meaning of that singular moment. The government of the Duke was like nothing since the days of Goffredo. The successive Podestàs—even the Capitano del Popolo—had been foreigners indeed, but were chosen and summoned to rule for a limited time and were otherwise kept in restraint by the city. Here Florence, for the first time since the proud self-assertion she made at Settimo, accepts a true tyrant, without sufficient guarantee that her liberties would be respected, and bitterly did the city regret the eight months of that government, as profligate and cruel as absolute. The general conclusion is plain. We are not to think of the natural and automatic change which imposes military forms upon communities essentially commercial when war becomes a necessity. The form of 1342 shows us a true, though brief, tyranny, as surely as that of 1250 discovers a real, though partial, basis of popular government. The lesson of the Bargello then is this: strike at the

life of the city, which lies in her credit; strike till she faints, and any one, even the Duke of Athens, may sit here and rule as he will. But let credit stand and commerce rise, and add to this substance only a grain of spirit, and lo, at once the form more or less complete that is native to the place: the industrial government of Florence.

Palazzo Vecchio.

CHAPTER III

THE PALAZZO DELLA SIGNORIA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PRIORI

DURING the last twenty years the centre of Florence has been completely changed. The Piazza del Mercato, once the Roman Forum, has disappeared in the wider Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, together with many private dwellings and towers which once adjoined it on the South; and almost the whole surrounding mass of private buildings, streets, and lanes, including some half-dozen of the oldest Churches in Florence, has been swept away in favour of the regular modern quarter which now encloses the new Piazza. Much may be said both for and against these changes; we allude to them now only by way of introduction to the proper subject of this chapter, and as a singular instance of how exactly history has repeated itself in the long ages of Florentine civic development.

Those—and they will always be many—who deplore, with reason, what has been lost of late years in the destruction of the Mercato Vecchio and its surroundings, will do well to remember that even such a change is in a sense traditional here, and that, when we return to the latter half of the thirteenth century and the age which followed, we find masses of old houses, and three ancient Churches, then falling under the pick and spade to make room for the new Palazzo della Signoria and for the ample Piazza which, as time went on, came to surround the imposing residence of the Priori. This moment is too much forgotten, since its results, though at the time a striking innovation, have for us become part of the ancient city; but when Palazzo and Piazza were new there must have been Florentines who regretted what had passed away

very much as their descendants now do the lost Centre, and whom the new building and ampler space contrived here hardly compensated for the disappearance of the residential quarter, with all its memories, which had once occupied the place.

It were an interesting study to reconstruct, foot by foot and house by house, this part of ancient Florence as it stood before the Palace and the Piazza were thought of. To this end much material has been collected,[1] and more is available in the Archives of the city, while the whole still awaits a master hand able to represent this quarter in its ancient state as Carocci has done for the Centre of Florence.[2] While we wait so desirable a reconstruction a word or two may suffice here to put us in possession of the main facts of the case.

The immediate surroundings of the Piazza may be trusted to give us the principal lines between which its contents, in the shape of dwelling-houses, were once arranged. The most fundamental and important of these is the line of the Via dei Cerchi, running almost truly North and South, and by this token forming part of the original plan of Roman Florence. This line is continued with but little alteration in that of the Via delle Farine, which opens on the Piazza from the North, and even finds a sufficient correspondence in the passage between the Loggie of the Uffizi, thus bringing us to the bank of Arno. We may conclude, then, that a main artery of traffic, running North and South, must have existed here before the Piazza was made. Similarly the Via dei Gondi, which, if produced, passes the centre of the Piazza to reach the middle of its western side, gives us the other main artery, running at right angles to the first, and, with it, dividing the whole space in question into four somewhat irregular quarters. These in their turn were no doubt broken up, after the manner of old Florence, by lanes and internal courts into smaller blocks of building and individual isolated properties.

[1] See Dr. C. Frey, *Die Loggia dei Lanzi*, Berlin, 1885, whose identifications and map must, however, be taken with a certain degree of caution.

[2] See the anonymously published *Studi Storici sul Centro di Firenze*, and especially the most excellent map annexed to this work, which appeared in 1889.

Taking the quarters in order, that on the N.E., now represented by the corner of the Piazza between the side of the Palazzo Vecchio and the front of the Palazzo Uguccione, was covered by the houses of the Uberti, whose Church—San Romolo degli Uberti—stood, since the eleventh century, on a site near by, at the opening of the Via delle Farine on the Piazza. The next quarter, that now occupied by the N.W. corner of the Piazza, belonged for the most part to the same parish, and held houses of the Giuchi, Tedaldi, and Cavalcanti. The third, at the S.W. corner of the Piazza, had the ancient Church of Santa Cecilia, with a parish where lay the dwellings of the Malespini and Infangati; while the fourth, where the Palazzo Vecchio now stands, had its ecclesiastical centre in San Piero a Scheraggio at the corner of Via della Ninna and the Uffizi, and was covered by the towers of the Foraboschi and their cousins the Ormanni. We are now to see the changes which reduced this part of the city to its present shape.

The work was begun in 1259, when the Guelphs, then masters of Florence, pulled down some houses of the Uberti, the most prominent leaders of the opposite faction. The ruin of the first quarter was completed in 1283 in another access of partisan fury, when the rest of these properties were levelled to the ground, or left in ruins so little prominent that the place was called Piazza *olim Ubertorum* from the name of its former inhabitants. In this condition matters remained till the close of the century, when the Government of the Priori began to provide for its state and plan a fitting residence for the chief Magistrates of Florence. Their first deliberations in this direction bear date December 30th, 1298, and were followed by extensive purchases of houses for demolition during the following year. These lay in the Parish of San Piero a Scheraggio, on the site of the present Palace or near it, especially in front on the line of the Via Vacchereccia, which then prolonged itself eastward to meet the Via della Ninna at the corner of San Piero. On the 1st April, 1300, the site being now chosen and ready to be cleared, the Commune considered the claims of Arnolfo di Cambio of Colle in Val d'Elsa, chief clerk of works at the

Cathedral, electing him by ballot the Architect of the new Palace, and granting him lifelong exemption from every kind of civic tax. Thus all was ready at last for the great work.

Before studying Arnolfo's building, as we shall presently do, let us delay a moment in view of the preceding demolitions, and even take the liberty of passing to those which followed, that we may understand how the Piazza came to have the space and form with which we are now familiar. The purchases made here by the Commune in 1299 are interesting, as confirming Vasari's account of the difficulties artificially imposed on Arnolfo by the keen political feeling of those who employed him. The Piazza *olim Ubertorum* was free, and would have formed the natural site for the new building, but those who razed it had determined that so this space should remain as a perpetual witness against the Ghibellines. Hence they chose their ground, not here but in the adjoining quarter, and, in buying out the occupiers, extended their purchases of houses westward, as if determined that not even the main front of the Palace should face the abhorred ground, unfit, in their opinion, to furnish so much as a Piazza to what they were about to build. But this was a temper evidently too fierce to last; it had sunk, we may believe, ere the Duke of Athens came on the scene, and, choosing the Palace as his residence, ordered great changes here. To the right, the ground was free where the Uberti had once dwelt; in front, to the West, a small space had been cleared, but between these two openings a solid wedge of houses still pushed its mass forward from the North-West, till it nearly touched the answering angle of the Palazzo. The Duke saw danger in this approach, for what if, in some popular rising, these towers were armed and turned against him whose house they so nearly commanded? Hence an extensive clearing in 1343, when the Church of San Romolo disappeared, the Piazza was set free to the corner at the Via Calzaiuoli, and the whole line of its present North side drawn from that new angle to the other at the Via dei Magazzini. The rest followed, and not, it would seem, without some natural relation to the tumult of the Ciompi, and the new order that came with the close of the fourteenth century at Florence. In 1386 the West face of the Piazza

was already set back on its present line, in the destruction of the remaining buildings which, till then, had stood in front of it, including the Church of Saint Cecilia and some houses of the Tedaldi. Thus the seat of Government stood widely free at last, save on the South, and even here something was presently done. Before the century closed the Loggia of the Commune had taken the place occupied till 1376 by the houses of the Baroncelli and others. In 1410 the Via della Ninna, hitherto a mere lane, was widened by the destruction of the north aisle of San Piero a Scheraggio, and in 1561, Vasari cleared away the south aisle of the same Church to make room for his work in the building of the Uffizi. The principal Nave of San Piero disappeared in the eighteenth century, and to-day the only relic of this ancient building is the beautiful *ambone* which was fortunately transferred to the Church of San Leonardo at Arcetri. Thus we reach at last the state of things familiar to-day in the vicinity of the Palazzo Vecchio.

To return to 1299: the destruction planned in that closing year of the thirteenth century held construction well in view, and every subsequent change we have noted had relation to the Palace Arnolfo built; it is time, then, that we should turn to examine more nearly so important an example of civic architecture. When the great master-builder assumed control, the site assigned him was still covered by houses which the pick and hammer had hardly begun to touch. Among these, we are told, was an ancient tower of the Foraboschi—the Vacca—so called from the alternative surname of Della Vacca which belonged to its inhabitants. Arnolfo, it is said, dreaming something wonderful in the same kind which should exceed the height of this ancient tower, even before the edict of 1250 had lopped it, resolved to spare its strength, and use it as the sure foundation of his own supreme creation. What are we to think of this tale; has it any discoverable foundation in fact? A certain corroboration appears at once from the position of Arnolfo's belfry, which, as all the world knows, rises from a point considerably to the south of where symmetry would make us expect to find it. Now such an irregularity must have a reason, and it may well

be that this is to be found in the original position of the Vacca, taken together with the limitations, artificial and natural, which forbade Arnolfo to intrude, northward, on the Uberti ground, or to pass, southward, the line of the Via della Ninna and the adjoining flank of San Piero. If the Vacca stood at the point we have indicated, then its use by Arnolfo would clearly imply just the irregularity noticeable in the placing of his own belfry. But did the Vacca so stand, and does it remain to-day as the hidden substructure of the visible tower? Such a thing were not only a wonderful permanence of the remote past in the present day, but a feat of Architecture promising details of the utmost interest; and on both accounts then the matter is one deserving further attention and accurate inquiry.

If we pass within the principal door of the Palazzo Vecchio, we find at once, on our left, the foundations of Arnolfo's tower, which drop perpendicularly through the loggia vaulting to rest in the basement of the cortile it surrounds. Here, another irregularity of a highly significant kind arrests attention. The back wall, where the weight of the tower rests on this side, is not parallel with the façade of the Palazzo; and here, again, as before, the easiest and most natural explanation of this irregularity would be that, at this point, the architect had seen fit to incorporate with his building some ancient fabric standing on this part of the site. Now, if we apply the compass to this problem, we shall find that the line of inclination to the façade, noticeable in the foundations of the back wall of the tower, corresponds almost exactly with that of the ancient Via dei Cerchi on the North of the Piazza: a line laid due North and South by the sun; one of the two determinators in the Roman system of castrametation on which, as is well known, Florence was first laid out. Thus a strong probability appears that the wall in question stood, long before Arnolfo's day, on the west side of an old street, the prolongation of the Via dei Cerchi towards San Piero a Scheraggio.

But was this building a tower such as the traditional Vacca is said to have been? Two considerations occur at once to furnish us with a ready test. Arnolfo's belfry above is foursquare, and falls

true to the façade on which it partly rests: true behind as well as before. If, therefore, he used as its foundation an ancient building set on other lines, there must be a point where contrivance would be necessary to combine the under with the upper, and where that contrivance may be expected to show itself in visible form. Further, it is possible, even *a priori*, to say where that point will fall. On the back wall certainly, for the front must bore its way obliquely into the façade and be lost there. And this point will lie at a height of some fifty braccia if we are dealing with an ancient tower, for all such buildings were cut down to this measure by the law of 1250. Now, from the pavement of the Loggia to its vaults there is no sign of change; and, similarly, when it passes through the rooms of the first floor this wall maintains its original inclination, for we find it still untrue, even in the storey above, in the apartment of Eleanor of Toledo. But follow it yet higher, to a level corresponding with that of the great stone machicolations of the façade in front. Here, in the house of the head mason of the Palazzo, we find just what we have ventured to expect. Arnolfo's tower begins its mighty spring and course over the head of the older work; agreeing nearly with it at the S.E. angle, but gaining gradually as it goes northward till, at the N.E. corner, the overhang amounts to nearly three feet. At this point a great stone bracket, normal to the back line of what it carries, takes the projection in hand, and begins a series of these supports, which, moving backward, to the south, dies gradually away to the point at the S.E. corner where the one tower falls true upon the other. This is the most interesting architectural feature in the whole building, and when once one has seen and studied it he can as little doubt that what receives the graft of these wonderful brackets is the Vacca tower, as that the belfry they support is the campanile of Arnolfo. So far, then, the observed facts of the building confirm the tradition of its foundation.

One point there is, however, in the story as told by Vasari which seems at variance with the truth. He says that Arnolfo, wishing to provide a secure foundation, "filled the said tower with good

material, so that it was then easy for other masters to raise upon it the very lofty belfry which we see to-day." Passing by the question of these "other masters," of whom no trace seems to have been elsewhere found, it is necessary to observe that this "filling" of the old tower must not be taken *au pied de la lettre*, for later research has shown that it was by no means complete. Del Rosso,[1] Architect here in 1814, in the course of repairs to the *Scrittoio* on the first floor, through which this tower passes, found a door in it at this level which had long been walled up. Breaking through, he discovered a room lit and ventilated by a narrow opening to the front of the façade, which is still visible from the Piazza in the form of a slit. This, he suggests, rather than that commonly shown near the belfry, may have been the Alberghetto, the dungeon from which Cosimo I in 1431 heard the clash of arms and the bells ringing-in the Balìa, and where, therefore, we may add, Savonarola may have spent the last tortured hours of his tragic life. Beside it, says Del Rosso, but nearer the centre of the tower, was a shaft rising out of sight above, and sinking, as verified by his plummet, to a level at six braccia below that of the pavement in the cortile. The air which issued from this well was pestilential, and he supplies us with the probable reason when he says that the depth touched answers exactly to that of the system of passages under the Palace. We are here in presence of a drainage plan which no doubt fell, from Roman days, to the neighbouring *scheraggio;* that great sewer running to Arno on the line of the Via dei Castellani, which gave the neighbouring Church of San Piero its distinctive name.

The use made of the Vacca Tower by Arnolfo is not so singular as it is significant in its relation to the whole architectural development of the time as seen in the civic buildings of Florence. In our study of the Bargello we saw how some unknown builder imitated there the *palace*, elsewhere evolved by the slow progress of combined tower-building about the *insulæ*, and suddenly revealed in these groups by the action of the law passed in 1250 to restrain their height. The same may be said of the Palazzo Vecchio in its western and older part; and here, accordingly, by the art of

[1] G. Del Rosso, *Ragguaglio di particolarità del Palazzo della Signoria*, Siena, Porri, 1815.

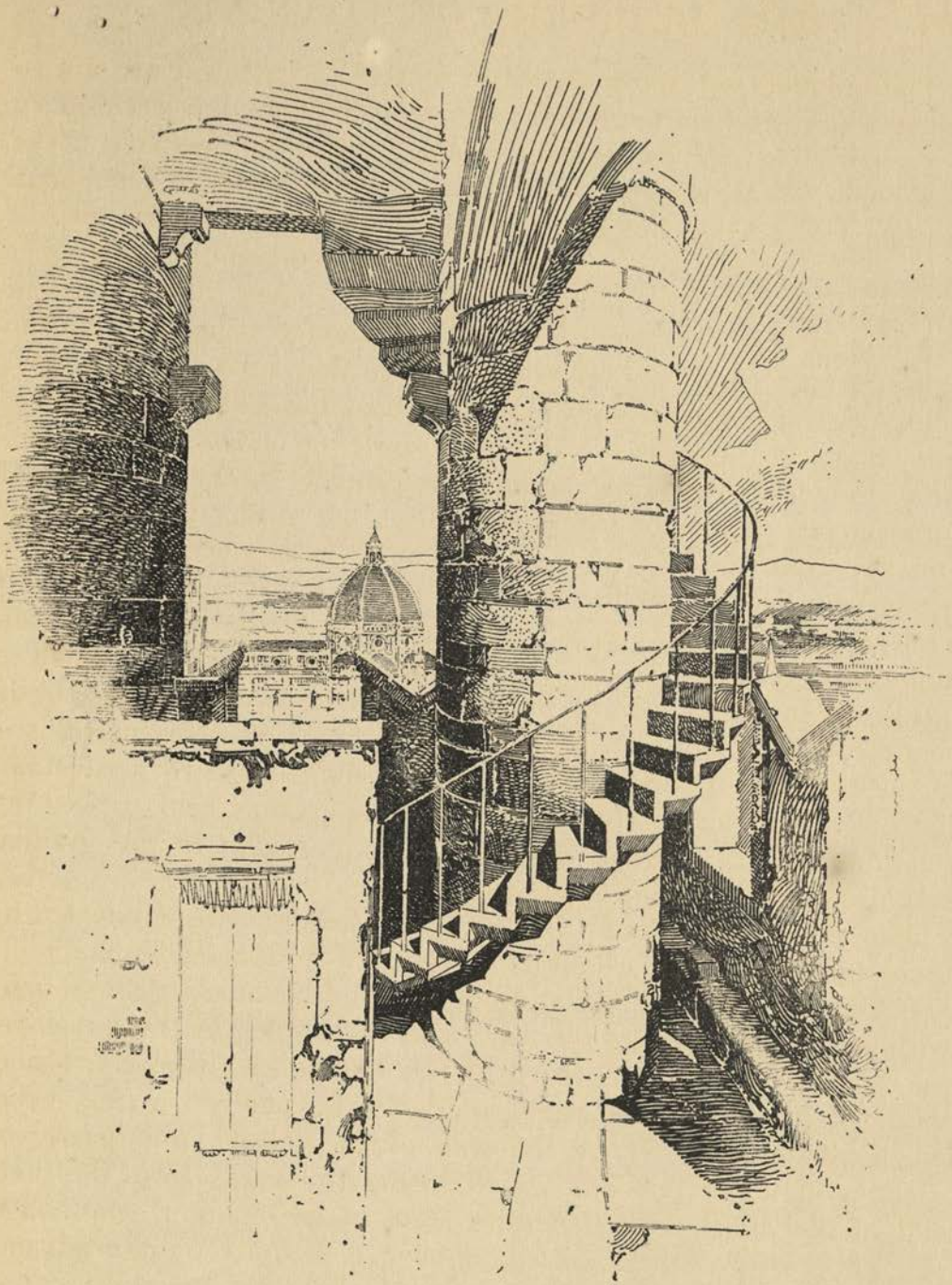
Loggia dei Lanzi

Arnolfo, we have an actual tower of former times, not left at one corner like the Volognana of the Bargello, but lost to sight only because incorporated in the substance of the façade; it is the building unit of old Florence preserved, like a fly in amber, behind the vast and studied mimicry of the natural group or system these towers had come to compose: the imitative palace of the thirteenth century enclosing the simple original house which was the starting-point of the whole.

As we adopt it, this view opens to disclose new meanings. The brackets used by Arnolfo to connect the summit of the Vacca tower, on the eastern side, with his own belfry, were then an adaptation rather than an invention: an adaptation of the stone machicolation which past ages had constantly used as the crown of such towers. And if this is plain, even in the hidden use of these brackets, where we have found them on the east, what shall we say of their open display on the western front? Here, it is true, the deep wall of the façade intervenes; yet into this depth the Vacca pushes its shoulder forward obliquely, so that, at its N.W. corner, the whole perpendicular line of the tower-angle lies but a little way behind the front wall of the Palace, reduced at this point to a mere skin of stone. How sure then, that, of the great brackets visible from the Piazza, one at least, and probably two, are deeply set and sunk in the substance, not of the façade, but of the older tower it conceals; and, if so, then by these two members to which it gives support, it is the Vacca that determines and develops about Arnolfo's building that system of stone machicolations which forms its stern and glorious crown. The wooden-eaved roof—almost a necessity to private householders since 1250—here gives way, when it is a question of civic magnificence and the deep purse of the public, to a fortified cornice, which is, indeed, but the extension on a grander scale of what had been the traditional means of defence in the towers. And to this development the tower that watches still, unseen behind the worn façade, is firmly and fittingly joined by these two brackets, which Arnolfo so cunningly set in its very substance: they are thus the generative element of the whole arcade.

The brackets set about the head of the Vacca tower are not so much ornamental as functional: those on the back line entirely so, as contrived to bear on their diminishing series the overhang of the new belfry which here juts and dies; those looking on the Piazza ornamental indeed, but yet more evidently useful, nor only for defence, but rather as carrying the prodigious advance of the upper tower, which here rises plumb from their outer face till it bursts out above in its further flower of spreading machicolations to form the belfry proper and support the pinnacle that crowns the whole. This magical feature, as we may call it, of the Palazzo Vecchio—the advance westwards of Arnolfo's tower beyond the façade, and what it encloses—is not to be measured merely by the four feet and some inches of its horizontal projection, but rather by the height and apparent mass of what is thus hung in air, which make the whole one of the architectural wonders of the world. And, if a closer examination reveal something of the artifice by which alone such building could become statically possible, the result is not to diminish our wonder but to increase it, as we note the subtle secrets of Arnolfo's craft that lie here concealed. Nay more, it is in the analysis of these devices that we shall begin to understand the true character of this upper tower-projection, and to see the relation it holds to what preceded and followed it in the gradual evolution of Florentine civic Architecture.

The external brackets of the Palazzo Vecchio are connected by arches which support a double gallery; the first, lying immediately above these, enclosed throughout its whole course as a casemate with arched openings to the front and drop-holes in the pavement for defence; the other carried at the roof level above the tunnel vault of the first. These galleries rest, partly on the great machicolations, partly on the wall of the façade, and partly on a series of lesser brackets which spring roofwards from the inner side of the wall. This general system of fortification, common to the whole of Arnolfo's palace, is broken in upon by the advance through it of the great belfry tower, which, as we have said, comes forward to take its superb spring from the sheer front of the western brackets. Conversely then, to preserve their necessary continuity,



Column & Stairway
from Belfry of Signoria.

these galleries pierce the base of the tower from North to South at two levels, the one over the other; and this is a device which, while it secures needed communication along the double line of defence, is clearly not without importance as regards the statics of the tower itself. For, first, these two open storeys, as we may call them, distinctly diminish the weight that rests on the brackets here, and next, being arched above, they gently and invisibly transfer, by virtue of that form with its singular power, at least one-half of their load from the brackets to the strong wall in which these are set, not to speak of the tower that wall encloses. And, higher still, that load is again invisibly, yet not less really, diminished by a turn in the mounting stair which, at the level of the cell shown as "Cosimo's Prison," brings it to the west front of the tower, and thus once more creates in the overhang a hollow storey, faced and concealed by a comparatively light wall. These artifices are unseen from below, unconsidered by the casual observer, and when pondered by the student only increase his wonder while giving his interest a new direction.

It is the development of the powers of the bracket we here observe, and of that system of building by projection which used the bracket as its essential and functional feature. For ages past the towers had put out such a system, but occasionally, using wooden struts set in putlog-holes, and making their galleries removable at pleasure, or rather at call to arms and in favour of the tower crowns, which thus commanded door and street from their stone galleries and yawning drop-holes. The advance now to be gained consisted in making what had been temporary permanent; replacing the struts by solid stone brackets, and raising the galleries over these, storey upon storey, behind a light stone wall. Thus new house-room was created without encroaching on the street, and where the old manner of defence was still thought of, a further advance of the crowning machicolations beyond the new front was all that was needed to secure it. Such was, in fact, the altered practice of the fourteenth century, as seen in houses like those of the Davanzati and Salviati, but first and most completely in the belfry tower of the Palazzo Vecchio, thus made a model in a new

style to the whole city on which it looked down. The first brackets here lie indeed about the crown of the Vacca, as if to perpetuate in larger forms the time-honoured battlements of the towers, but, in a truer and more accurate sense, they broaden the base of the belfry that rests upon them. And in front especially, these galleries, one over the other, and that upper storey with the stair, what do they make of the belfry but a permanent projection, hollowed artfully for lightness, resting on brackets below, and above, admitting and supporting that further advance of battlements over pavement in which defence found its ultimate expression? We know exactly whence Arnolfo took his idea, for what he built here is but the petrification—the translation into permanent stone—of the earlier system of wooden tower-galleries. And we note the success of his boldness, knowing that this belfry set the Florence fashion of such projection over almost every street front, till the will of Alessandro dei Medici in 1533 came to prune these *sporti*, as they were called, very much as the Act of 1250 had done by the earlier form of the battlemented towers. Thus, from the Vacca itself, by the façade brackets, to that higher belfry which these help it to support, the Palazzo Vecchio shows work illustrating the connected progress of civic building in Florence from the earliest Middle Ages to the times of the later Medici.

In its relation to history, the Palazzo Vecchio stands for the new Government of Florence which called it into being. But the form adopted in 1293 had an earlier period of appearance and growth, and was favoured by many circumstances, external and internal, which determined its progress, spirit and shape. Of all these we must take some account if we are rightly to understand and value this, in many respects the culminating point of the Civic life and fortunes.

The Primo Popolo of 1250 showed its weakness ten years later, when Florence was defeated at Montaperto, and the Ghibellines came into power. The Podestà now assumed his old preëminence, and the only relic of the past was the presence in his council of twenty-four citizens whom their fellows elected to represent the popular party there—four from each *sestiere*. Meanwhile the

Guelph exiles of Florence were wandering far, but not idly; turning to commerce, establishing houses of business abroad, in France especially, and thus preparing the sinews of new strength against the day of their return to power at home. Nor was that day long delayed. The death of Manfred in the battle of Benevento (1266) was a severe blow to the Ghibellines everywhere, as it implied the triumph of those Angevin arms which the See of Rome had called from France to humble the Hohenstaufen. Florence, especially, proved sensitive to the altered situation, summoning the two Frati Gaudenti from Bologna to give her a new constitution. The Conte Guido Novello fled, and the Capitano del Popolo again made his appearance by the side of the Podestà, checking, as in 1250, the power of that official when opposed to the popular interest. The rise of the *popolo grasso*—the community of substantial merchants—began; they pushed the nobility from place in the councils of the Capitano while themselves sitting in those of the Podestà; their Guild government was a growing school of politics where the artisans of Florence were trained till they became capable of affairs in the larger state; and the whole significant change was affirmed, and its further development assured, in 1269, by the formation of the famous Parte Guelfa with its seat in S. Maria Sopra Portam: the department whose business it was to crush the Ghibellines by civic imposts, to destroy their houses, and to administer the funds thus gained in favour of the opposite party. The defeat of Corradino at Tagliacozzo, which took place in 1268, had encouraged this active opposition, as dealing the death-blow to Ghibelline hopes in Italy.

We are not to suppose, however, that because the new Florence of the *popolo grasso* was opposed to Manfred and to Corradino, it was disposed to fall blindly into the hands of the French. The "Sicilian Vespers" of 1282, by breaking the Angevin power in the South, brought a welcome relief both at Florence and Rome, which had alike feared lest this foreign force, summoned as a check upon the Empire, should become, in its turn, a new Italian tyranny. In Florence especially the moment was hailed as one of good omen; it opened the way by which the city might anew

affirm its independence, alike of Emperor and King and Pope. Hence the constitution of 1282, in which first appears the person of a "Defensor Artium et Artificum"; then the heads of Calimala, Cambio and Lana are, as such, summoned to the leading places in the Government, and, in the month of August, these Priors are increased from three to six, one to represent each of the Major Arts. Thus, for the first time, from the firm basis of the Trade Guilds as a source of real power and school of adroit politics, Florence found her way to a truly representative Government; found herself, in fact, not merely as a democracy, but as, what in truth she was, a republic of tradesmen and merchants.

The sea-fight of the Meloria, fatal to Ghibelline Pisa, and the victory of Florence over Arezzo at Campaldino (1288) completed the ruin of the Imperial party in Tuscany, and so decisively, that henceforth the names of Guelph and Ghibelline, as applied to Italian factions, lose almost all their former meaning. New interests are now at stake, new lines of cleavage begin to divide men and houses, and Florence feels the need of setting her state still further in order to meet the altered circumstances of the times.

Hence, then, Giano della Bella—the man appearing with the hour—and the *Ordini di Giustizia*, the reforms of 1293, in which we see the final shape assumed by the new form of the State inaugurated eleven years before. When the six Priors were about to quit office, they provided for a due succession in the following way. At the summons of the Capitano del Popolo, the head of the executive, they called together the Capitudini of the Major Arts, now twelve in number, and with them associated, as a council *ad hoc*, such citizens of worth and wit as they might choose. This assembly elected the new Priors, who must be found among those whose names appeared in the Matriculation rolls of the Arts. No Prior going out of office was reëligible till two years had passed, a disability afterwards extended to his immediate relations. The Priors held office for two months only, and their first act, when elected, was to choose one of themselves to be *primus inter pares*, under the name of the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, the head of the Republic, who held at his orders the Podestà and the Capitano del

Popolo, the related forces of law, and of that executive which secured public order and safety. That these forces might be real and greater than ever, Giano della Bella introduced and carried a supplementary ordinance, placing two thousand men-at-arms under the orders of the Gonfaloniere, besides a squad of two hundred masons, carpenters, and pickmen to throw down the houses of any who might resist the civic decrees. Even this force added less strength to the Republic than the fact that, under these new arrangements, all willing and capable men who had the true interests of their City at heart were sure of rising to the Priorate when their turn came, and that divided counsels or doubt regarding the seat of authority became, as nearly as possible, an unknown quantity in the Florence of the new regime.

It is easy to see that this, which in some respects we may venture to call the final, as it is certainly the most native and characteristic, form of Florentine Government had close relation to the substance of the civic fortunes: the trade and the manufactures lying at the foundation of the city's life. The Priori, who represented the *sestieri*, were craftsmen of the Guilds, and stood in a less visible but not less real way for the Arti from which they were chosen. And the powers of debate and decision which they brought to the civic service had been formed and trained in those Guild councils and offices which made of every artisan in Florence a statesman in embryo. But we must repeat that the form, here as elsewhere, is the result and product of the substance when acted on by the *genius loci*, the indwelling spirit of the place. And as the commerce of Florence developed during the later thirteenth century, so her spirit rose in a progress that attained heights undreamed of before. That rise and progress must now for a little claim our attention.

On a broad view of the matter, the Ghibelline had been, for a century past, the aristocratic party in Florence, led by the descendants of the foreign nobility once supreme in the *contado*; while the Guelph interest was that of the people, the substantial State that had broken the power of feudalism to emerge as an independent political factor in Italy, and assume the leadership of its

party in Tuscany. Yet from this general statement an important deduction must be made. Even among the nobility some houses had joined the Guelphs, and, on the other hand, the progress of commerce had brought not a few of its representatives to a position hardly distinguished from that of the territorial nobles. Aristocratic tradition in the one class, and acquired position in the other, made such men both ambitious and capable of leading their party, and, as long as the opposing interest of the Ghibellines had still to be reckoned with, the party, though essentially popular, accepted that leadership, and gave their aristocrats congenial work to do as the official Parte Guelfa, the scourge of the Ghibellines in Florence; while welcoming in the same spirit the arms and success of the Angevins in the further battlefields of Italy.

But when that success was complete in the victory of Tagliacozzo, the situation was changed, and the real spirit and meaning of Florence began to appear. The hero of the day—Charles of Anjou—became the object of suspicion as a possible tyrant, and this jealousy began to attach itself to the party he favoured: the Guelph nobility, whose numbers and pretensions grew with every royal visit; for the King never came to Florence without holding court, and distributing titles and decorations with a lavish hand. The city had been content to use these men for what they were worth, as long as the Ghibellines menaced her liberties, just as, for the same reason, she welcomed the King as the destroyer of the dying Imperial cause; but she had no mind to sacrifice her freedom to either the one or the other. This is the moment of which we have already spoken, when Ghibellinism was dead, and when therefore Guelphism, in the old sense of the word, ceased to exist. A new world was born, new lines divided the parties in Italy, and at Florence the *popolo grasso* and *minuto* began to feel that its real enemy was the party of the Grandi, whatever the source, quality or colour of their nobility might have been. They were the party of the King, and, as such, a real danger to the civic liberty, against which the State must needs stand on its guard. The men whose forefathers had broken feudalism in the *contado*

would not brook the growing pretensions of civic aristocracy, on whatever grounds it might attempt to rebuild its power.

Plainly, it was this awakened and democratic spirit which gave form to the Government of 1282, decreeing that the Trades, and they alone, should furnish Magistrates to rule and lead the Republic. The same temper informed the "Ordini" of 1293, and, if Giano della Bella had continued in power but a little longer, the bold attack he planned on the Parte Guelfa itself, as the prime source of possible mischief, would have been carried out under all the forms of law. As it was, nobility became an actual disqualification for office in the new Government of the *Secondo Popolo*, and hence, from 1282 onwards, we find the aristocratic families changing their names, entering commerce, or at least matriculating in the Trade Guilds as the only door and way to a political career. Thus the people conquered, and whereas their forefathers had compelled the nobles to reside in Florence, they now saw the representatives of aristocracy forced, by the new form of State, to deny their pretensions and sue for admission to the all-powerful Guilds of the commonwealth they had despised. It was a fair revenge, in which the Florentine democracy sought to realise the dream of the ideal City, the mother of classic Civility.

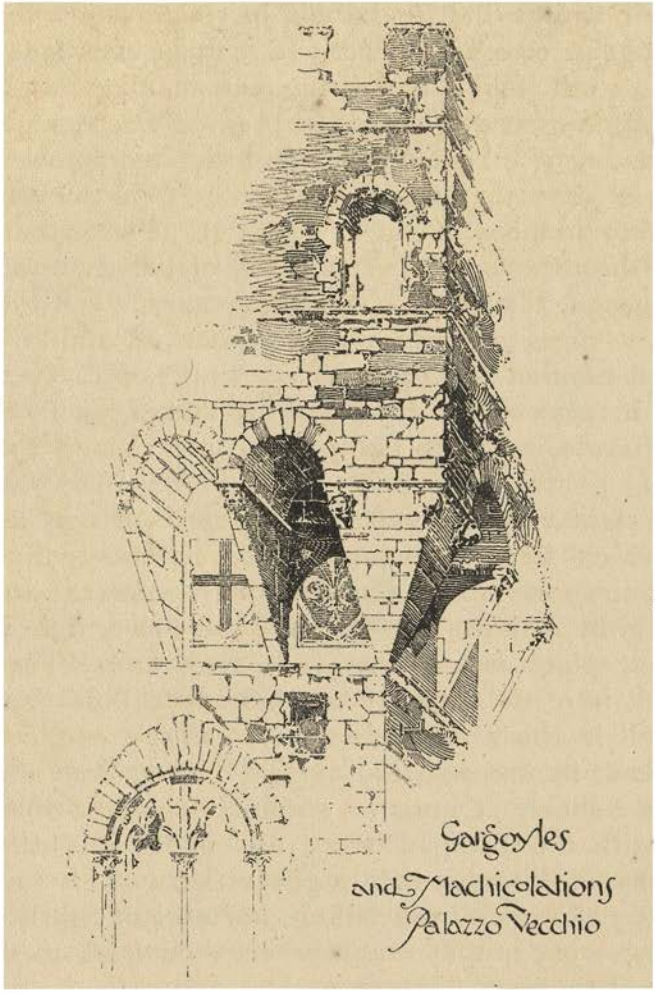
Nay, in one point at least, the period and Government we are examining outran the whole past, and went far to anticipate the later doctrine of the rights of man, and the foundation of the modern State. On the 6th of August, 1289, Florence passed a law abolishing the last remnants of slavery within her territory; not only making it illegal to buy or sell the persons of men, but allowing vassals to reclaim their liberty at a price, even from those voluntary obligations into which they had entered with regard to the service of their superiors. The immediate purpose of this provision connects it with the whole policy of the place and times; for thus the landowners were, at one stroke, deprived of that servile following on which they principally founded their aristocratic pretensions to power, and at the same time the City laid, in the gratitude of these freedmen, a deep and wide base for her own democratic rule, not within the walls of Florence only but throughout the

whole contado. And the preamble of the Act, speaking as it does of "Liberty, in which every man's will is bound by his own choice and not by that of another: Liberty, glorious in manifold wise under the law of Nature, by which, too, States and nations are held safe from oppression and their just rights guarded and increased," strikes a mounting note which transcends the immediate occasion and local policy of the moment, making this by far the most remarkable utterance of the later Middle Age, and tempting us to reckon the time that first heard it not merely an epoch, but the opening of modern history. We entered on this study of the form in Florentine Government not without the hope that thus, indirectly and through its effects, the Spirit of the great scene might best be realised. That hope has not been deceptive; the Spirit of Florence is here, rising above its circumstances, and finding voice at last to tell us plainly what it is: the Spirit of Freedom, strong to inspire a democracy, and create, of divers and often antagonistic elements, a new Civility, the immediate precursor of the Modern State.

In a final word, let us compare the subjects of this chapter and of the last; we shall see how architecture and history illustrate one another, running on parallel lines, and in a progress which relates the *Primo* to the *Secondo Popolo*, in monuments and politics alike, as springtime to harvest, or the seed to the tree. The Bargello was built on lines not unlike those of the later Palazzo dei Priori, but was built to bear a temporary system of applied wooden galleries which time has swept away. In the later building of 1298, on the other hand, this system is made permanent, translated into stone, and lifted high to a place of honour in the marvel of Arnolfo's tower. That tower, like the Volognana of the Bargello, gives an external feature to the whole surrounding fabric, but what it casts along these mighty walls is not a mere series of pigeonholes, where struts may sometimes find foothold, or beams their points of bearing, but a crown of battlements built, from the first and for ever, in lasting stone.

Now this translation of the temporary into the permanent, this attainment of final and enduring form is found, not in the Palazzo

Vecchio alone, but in the Government for which it was built, and will appear at once if we compare this later political system with that of 1250. For, as we have said, the *Primo Popolo* was evidently no more than a compromise. In it the popular party



made its first open appearance under the Capitano, and succeeded for a time in holding its own against the aristocrats and their Podestà. But war came, and, as the towers used to take in their galleries at the alarm, so this compromise, which could never have

been more than a temporary expedient, gave way before the shock of arms and the great disaster of 1260. The heads of the *Secondo Popolo,* on the other hand, built in more lasting sort, excluding the aristocracy, drawing on the Trade Guilds for their Priors, gathering all power in the hands of their Gonfaloniere. As Arnolfo strengthened an old tower and made it the base of his own new creation, so the foundation of the *Secondo Popolo* was laid deep in the unbroken power and continued progress of the popular party. What was new rested on this basis, and frankly expressed its relation thereto in forms that promised therefore to be permanent.

Nor was this promise altogether deceitful. The Duke of Athens owed the position he used so ill to a financial crisis, and to a brief period of consequent shock and discouragement. His tyranny was reckoned by months only, soon giving place, in Palace and city, to the time-honoured Government of the Priori. The revolt of the Ciompi in 1379 was a more serious matter, as involving the inevitable dispute between the greater and lesser Trades, the latter seeking political power to promote a narrow policy of their own, inconsistent with the wider and deeper political interests of Florence, which her Merchants rather represented. Yet this too was but temporary, and the ancient Government resumed its accustomed sway, holding it still till the last Priors were put out of office. Their place and power, it is true, had become merely formal, but it is of the form we are here speaking. Truly, those had built well in this kind who contrived what proved able to last so long. And, in the end, the ancient Government of Florence yielded to no shock of arms or sudden popular discontent, but inevitably, with the changed times, and under a subtle Tyranny which had sapped for more than a generation its very foundations. The substance of the city was failing, her ancient Spirit a thing of the past. No wonder that what had resulted from these did not long survive their decay.

CHAPTER IV

SAN MARCO AND THE POLITICS OF SAVONAROLA

DURING the thirteenth century the north side of Florence presented a very different aspect from that which it afterwards came to assume. The ancient (1170) walls here ran on the line of the present Via Cerretani. The Baptistery being the Cathedral, the Porta del Duomo opened opposite, and at no great distance from, its northern side, corresponding to the Borgo San Lorenzo, which then lay outside the city. From this gate the wall ran eastward to the south end of the Via dei Servi, where there was another opening, the Porta, or Postierla dei Visdomini. Beyond the wall northward there was building, on the lines of the Borgo San Lorenzo, the Via Martelli, then called the Via degli Spadai, and the Via dei Servi, known in these days as the Borgo del Ciliegio, but the houses were few and scattered and the country open, with fields and trees. The ground between the Via degli Spadai and the Borgo Ciliegio, from the old walls northward as far as the line of the present Viali at least, was known by the name of the Cafaggio, or field of the beech tree; a green suburb watered by the Mugnone, which then flowed through it, passing by the mills of the Macine and San Lorenzo to form and feed the great moat of Florence, finding thus its way to the Arno by the line of the Via dei Fossi.

Now in the very heart of Cafaggio had stood, from what early time we know not, an Oratory dedicated in the name of San Marco; near the town, therefore, yet surrounded by a kind of sylvan solitude of its own. About the middle of the century we find this place of worship in the hands of certain Laudesi of the

Virgin, one of those pious societies of sacred song which were so marked a feature of Florentine religious life in these days. For the rest, Cafaggio, taken ecclesiastically, formed part of the great Parish attached to Santa Reparata, and lay, therefore, within the jurisdiction of the Canons belonging to that Church.

The first considerable change here was primarily of a civil character, and came at the close of the century, when Florence was extending her boundary in every direction by building the new encircling wall (1280–1327). Cafaggio thus ceased to be country and became town territory, and its bounding *borghi* had their lines drawn northward to pierce the new limit at the gates of San Gallo and Pinti. This altered situation almost implied a corresponding ecclesiastical change, which indeed at once appeared. The See of Florence had already sold land in Cafaggio to a certain Tedice Manovelli, who, in 1299, parted with it to the Sylvestrine Monks, a branch of the Vallombrosian Order, whose chief seat was in the convent of Montefano. This purchase was meant to provide a site for the first convent of San Marco; the Sylvestrines having arranged matters with the Laudesi and begun—probably since 1290—to use the adjacent Oratory for their Offices, though the expropriation was not complete, as the Laudesi still continued to sing there as before at stated times. There is reason to think that the Sylvestrines had come to Cafaggio on the invitation of Francesco Monaldeschi of Bagnorea, Bishop of Florence, for it was his hand that set and blessed here the first stone in their new Church of San Marco on the 8th March, 1299, in presence of the Bishop of Rieti and the neighbouring Abbots of the Badia and Santa Maria Maggiore of Florence. And the whole enterprise was crowned a year later, when, on the 1st July, 1300, the Bishop gave San Marco a regular Parish, bounded on the South by the old walls, on the East by the Via dei Servi and its continuation as far as the Mugnone, which stream confined the parish on the North, while its western boundary was the Via degli Spadai, now the Via Martelli, with a continuation to the banks of the Mugnone on the line of the present Via Cavour. Thus the Bishop's creation was complete, though the matter did not pass without protest, the

In the second cloister,
San Marco.

Canons of the Cathedral conceiving that without their consent the Parish of the See could not thus be parcelled out and part of it given to others. The dispute continued till 1325, after which date all parties seem to have acquiesced in the new arrangement.

The Church and Convent of San Marco, which the Sylvestrines began to build in 1299, while Florence was busy with her new walls, and the Palazzo Vecchio was rising, not only stood on the site of the present buildings, but covered nearly the same ground. Later changes have had the effect of superposing the architecture and decoration of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries upon the earlier walls and foundations, which, however, persist to-day in a measure sufficient to give a sure and fair idea of what their first state must have been. Especially is this true of the Church, whose walls, in their substance, are those of the Sylvestrines, as witness the window arches of the Nave still visible from the first cloister. These are built of the brown *pietra forte* in an elegant, slightly pointed form, and bear witness, with those of the Badia and Santa Maria Novella, to the prevailing fashion of the day. They were probably the most striking architectural feature of the Church, which, given the austerity of the early Sylvestrines, we are to think of as a simple oblong without Chancel or Transept projections; its Choir constructed internally by the help of a *tramezzo*; its roof of open woodwork covered by tiles; its walls, if we are to believe Vasari, in great part decorated by the hand of Pietro Cavallini, whose Annunciation by the principal door may still be seen in the state to which much restoration has reduced it. And, since Vasari's day, the scraper has rediscovered for us other fragments of the early frescoes which he attributed to the same skilful hand. Documents bearing on this place and period are scarce; we only know that, in 1355, Ser Francesco di Ser Berto Ansaldi of San Miniato al Tedesco left a will ordering a chapel here, which his descendants exchanged in 1424 for one next the High Altar belonging to the Martini. Important decorative features of the Church were supplied by Giotto in his painted Crucifix, once, no doubt, suspended from the roof over the Tramezzo, but now placed above the door; and by Lorenzo di Niccolò, who painted,

in 1409, for the Caponsacchi the great polyptych of the High Altar. This important picture, measuring some seven braccia high by six broad, where the Coronation of the Virgin shines in gold and colours with attendant Saints and Angels, may be seen in the Choir of San Domenico at Cortona, where it was placed in 1440. The High Altar at San Marco, for which it was painted, had been built and decorated in 1341 by Donna Fia, daughter of Pino Buonaccorsi and widow of Banco Caponsacchi.

As to the Sylvestrine Convent, the records it must once have possessed are no longer available, and we are left to study as best we may the relics of its construction still visible among the later buildings. A word or two will suffice to indicate these, and to develop the conclusions to which they lead. The first we meet is the façade of the Chapter-house, clearly of earlier date than the surrounding walls. The stone of which it is built is the same as that used in the older window-heads of the Church, and the arch-work here is no less characteristic of the early fourteenth century; clean-cut, close-set voussoirs, whose extrados rises *a falce* over the intrados in true Tuscan style, while the slightly pointed form of the arches themselves is just what we should expect in the Gothic period of Florentine building. The relation of this façade to its surroundings makes it sure that the first cloister of the Convent, even as it now stands, at least reproduces one of the same size built on this site by the Sylvestrines, and of which other remains no doubt exist behind the later plaster and frescoes that cover the adjacent walls of the quadrangle.

It would be too hazardous to say the same of the second, or great Cloister, but that the buildings of the Sylvestrines ran even farther to the North is certain, and we gain actual proof of this when we leave the second cloister to examine what lies outside it to the right. Here are two smaller quadrangles, the southern built in greater part during the fifteenth century; the northern, to which it leads, showing the earliest, though not the most beautiful, building of which this site can boast. In the former of these two cloisters the later hand has torn down the arched heads of every opening to replace them with the horizontal lintels in which the age delighted,

but beneath these features of the Renaissance the old material and work show plainly in their jambs, and correspond exactly with that seen already in the Chapter-house façade. Above, the roof of the *terrazza* facing south is borne by short columns with carved capitals, evidently borrowed from the earlier building here.

The northern Cloister, for the reason already assigned, merits a closer study and a more exact description. We are here at the extreme limit of these conventual buildings, having passed from the great quadrangle behind the Church to the rooms adjoining it on the East, and even crossed the open passage on which these look out. The cloister in question thus lies as far as possible to the North, between this passage and the street now called Via Lamarmora, once the "Maglio," or Mall, of Florence, which bounds the whole convent on the East. It consists of six bays covered by quadripartite vaults arranged about three sides of a small open space; the fourth side being closed by a simple wall against which the north and south vaults abut. These are longer than the others, and show segmental arches on the façade, while the eastern pair are semicircular; all four thus reaching the same height at the crown, though cast over spaces of widely differing span. The two remaining bays are entirely internal, lying in the north-east and south-east corners respectively, and coming to the cloister-front at the angles only, where they rest on its two corner columns. The whole has an air of clumsy depression not only unpleasing in itself but unlike the other early work we have found on our way to this cloister. Two explanations of so distinct a character seem alone possible. Either this was a very subordinate part of the Sylvestrian convent, on which no pains were spent, or, possibly, we have here something of the primitive Oratory of San Marco—perhaps its atrium—built at an earlier period still. The arch-work here certainly recalls that of the oldest cloister at Santa Maria Novella, and the octagonal column at the south-east corner, with its capital, rude and worn beyond the rest, suggests a date not later than the middle of the thirteenth century. If the primitive San Marco really stood here, beside the road, one could easily understand the arrangement between the Sylvestrines and the Laudesi,

for the latter would have ready access to any Chapel on this site without interfering with the building or use of the new Church on the other side of the Convent ground.

For a hundred years from their first entry at San Marco the Sylvestrines kept their place in the life of Florence with growing credit and respect, a token of which appeared in 1355, when the Priori chose Fra Jacopo and Fra Pace of this Convent to be the City Chamberlains. But, when the century had passed, another spirit entered with the new age; devotion cooled, worldliness gained ground, scandals came, and finally, in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, Florence cried out for the removal of an Order whose usefulness seemed altogether a thing of the past. Approach was made to the Council of Constance with a popular petition that the Sylvestrines of San Marco should give place to the Observantine Dominicans of Fiesole, and, in 1418, the Abbot of San Paolo a Ripa at Pisa, who had been deputed to hear and decide the case, gave judgment to that effect. The Sylvestrines appealed to the Council of Basle, with no other result, however, than that of delaying the execution of the sentence till 1436, when the Dominicans at last took possession of San Marco, and the Sylvestrines, condemned for the second time, were transferred to the Convent of San Giorgio on the Costa towards Arcetri.

The state of San Marco in these days was distinctly decadent, not only morally, but even in a material sense. It would seem that the Sylvestrines, at their entry here, had been straitened in means, and had built not as they would but as they could, raising weak walls on insufficient foundations. This was especially the case in the Convent, and was the cause of disaster there in the month of February, 1342, when, as Villani tells us (XII, 12), "a violent wind threw down the walls of the new dormitory . . . killing two Friars and a lay brother: truly these walls, for want of means, were very poor and ill founded." While the petition for the removal of the Sylvestrines was still pending the conditions at San Marco must have given new cause for uneasiness, for we find that building was going on here in 1422, and that, in 1427, the city committed the place to the care of the Guild of Silk, who would

thus become responsible for its safety, and for the choice of a Board of Works to superintend what was being done. But the whole circumstances of the case forbid our supposing that these works were other than the repairs urgently required by the defects of the earlier building.

When sentence was finally pronounced, however, and when, in 1436, the Dominicans entered San Marco, a new and important rebuilding of the Convent was at once begun in their interest. Their chief patrons were Cosimo il Vecchio and his brother, Lorenzo dei Medici, whose names, as those of the first citizens in the parish, and indeed in Florence, had already appeared in the petition that asked the removal of the Sylvestrines. Cosimo in particular showed personal concern in the matter. His new palace, now incorporated in the Riccardi, was rising, since 1430, on the west side of the Via Larga. As a man of substance, and a friend of the Dominicans, he promised Pope Eugenius IV that, if these Frati of the Osservanza were brought to San Marco, he would spend as a thank-offering upon the Church the then considerable sum of ten thousand scudi. Thus, with a fresh religious colony and a liberal patron, this place entered on a new period of development and prosperity.

In the Church, the attention and care of Cosimo were chiefly directed to the High Altar. The patrons of this principal Chapel under the Sylvestrine rule had been the Caponsacchi, and from their representative, Mariotto, grandson of the foundress, Cosimo acquired full rights over the place in 1438 at the price of five hundred ducats. His plan was to pierce the plain altar-wall and add a projecting Chancel, for which purpose he bought ground behind the Church from the Confraternity of the Holy Spirit to which it belonged. Michelozzi, busy in building the Medici palace near by, was naturally employed by Cosimo at San Marco as well, where he contrived that new High Altar, with Chancel and Choir complete, which Vasari commends. This praise is the more valuable as the buildings themselves have disappeared under the alterations of 1678. To complete our view of what was done here by Cosimo, and authenticate its details, we may quote from the contemporary

Chronicle of San Marco:—"In the year 1438 the aforesaid Chapter and Convent did then assign and give, freely, to the aforesaid citizens Cosmas and Laurentius, brothers, the said chapel; and they, recognising the said liberality of the said Mariottus, did of their free will assign and give to him five hundred ducats in gold. And they began to repair and rebuild the said Tribune, etc. In these days, when Fra Ciprianus was still Prior, the altar-piece of the High Altar, great and fair, adorned with many figures, and worth two hundred ducats, was given to the Frati of our Order in the convent of Cortona; chiefly at the instance of the aforesaid Fra Ciprianus, who caused paint (on this picture) the arms and names of the said Medici, whileas the picture now on the said High Altar was yet in painting." The Cortona altar-piece, in fact, bears the following inscription:—"Chosimo . elorenzo . demedici . da . Firenze . año . data . chuesta . tavola . afrati . disco : domenicho . dllosservanza . dacortona . per . lanima . loro . ediloro . passati . m . cccc . xxxx . " The new altar-piece, with which the Medici crowned their work in the Church of San Marco, was that panel representing the Virgin and Saints painted by Fra Angelico, and now to be seen in the Florentine Academy.

It was in the rebuilding of the Convent, however, that the royal liberality of the Medici was chiefly drawn upon and displayed. We have already seen the unsatisfactory state of its walls, and must now add that matters were made more urgent in this quarter by the accident of a fire in 1436—the very year when the Sylvestrines left—which destroyed the Dormitory. The first and urgent necessity would therefore be the repair of this damage, that the new-come Dominicans might find a roof over their heads at night. So, when Vasari tells us that Cosimo set Michelozzi to work in 1437, and that the architect began by providing twenty cells, a roof, and wooden furnishings for the refectory in that part of the Convent which adjoins Via Lamarmora, we seem to see the seat of the fire and the measures taken to repair its effects. It is in favour of such a view that, when this had been done, the works were suspended here for a time, while Michelozzi turned his attention to

the Tribune of the Church: Cosimo apparently caring to do no more for the moment in the Convent than repair the damages, and provide for the immediate needs of the place. The work of the Tribune, carried out in 1438 and the following year, is enough of itself to explain why the rebuilding of the Convent was interrupted, without reference to the fact that the expelled Sylvestrines were at law with the Dominicans about the buildings lately theirs; though Vasari may be right in saying that this quarrel, till sentence was given, was a cause that contributed to the delay.

When work was resumed on the Convent, Michelozzi gave it the building of the famous Library, presently furnished with the rarest books, many of these collected by Niccolò Niccoli, from whom Cosimo acquired them that he might fill the shelves of his favourite Dominicans. Then came the Dormitory, which was now completed, together with the columns, vaults, and other works of the first cloister. As it left the hand of the architect the Dormitory was simpler than we see it to-day; the beds standing in rows under one roof like those of a hospital ward, without the divisions which form the later cubicles. The second, or great cloister followed, with its Pharmacy opening on the Via Larga, and, as the Church had seen the glories of its new Chancel focussed in the altar-piece of Angelico, so now the same skilful and devout hand glorified the Convent; below, in the ancient Chapter where the Crucifixion shines; above, in the Dormitory, where by the head of every bed the painter knelt in turn to make of the whole place a Via Crucis by the subjects he chose, a gate of Heaven by the pure inspiration with which he treated these stories of the Life and Passion of Our Lord. Even this we owe to Cosimo, who, not content with what he had done for the Church, spent thirty-six thousand ducats on the Convent in one way or other, and while Michelozzi was busy here, gave the Dominicans of San Marco three hundred and sixty-six ducats yearly for their board. The Chronicle of the Convent tells us that the whole was finished in 1443, which agrees well enough with the fact that the painter who had given the place its crown, left Florence in 1445 to return no more. His body lies in the Dominican Church of Rome, but his spirit is here, if any-

where on earth, living and potent still in the work he has left at San Marco.

Yet it is of another spirit that we must rather speak, stronger far, as the world counts strength, than that of Angelico—stronger though not so pure; the spirit of him who rebuilt this Convent, even as he reformed the city, after his own will. Cosimo il Vecchio returns from exile in a kind of triumph, not to pine any longer in the Albergetto of the Signoria, but to plan his palace in the Via Larga, thenceforth the real seat of Florentine Government. He builds, as we have seen, for the Dominicans at San Marco, and bids Michelozzi make him a double cell in the Dormitory, where he may retire when he chooses to pass the day, and perhaps the night, in colloquy with Antonino, the sainted Prior of the place. The founder of the Medicean Government is also the founder here, and, fate ordering it so, this fabric of San Marco remains to represent strangely in its stone and lime the very lines of that secular policy which Cosimo and his successors pursued with such remarkable results. The study of this correspondence will bring us, by an easy transition, from the architectural to the human interest of this place; or, if we please to take it so, from the narrower to the larger history that gives San Marco its true meaning.

It is impossible to deny that the state of Florence showed symptoms which invited, if they did not justify, the interference of the Medici. The most serious of these was fundamental, and went to the very roots of government. From the beginning in a sense, and confessedly since 1293, the city had worn the form of a popular Republic. Yet, in spite of this democratic appearance, what were the significant facts of the case? The franchise did not extend to the Contado, and even within the city few possessed a vote: not the minor artisans, still less the common people, only the important families of the *borghesia grassa*, the heads of the Arti and their principal adherents, so that, even as late as the end of the fifteenth century, it is estimated that, out of the whole population, the electors only numbered some three thousand votes. Clearly then the broad base of an extended and truly popular suffrage was

wanting here: the only safe ground on which a Government pretending to democracy can surely rest.

From this initial mistake consequences not less serious made their presence felt. The Government, so founded, was inevitably in a constant condition of unstable equilibrium. On the one hand, from beneath the high-set electoral level, the lesser tradesmen, backed by the people, were clamouring for the suffrage, and had already, as the Ciompi, claimed with success, though for a brief period only, admission to the conduct of the State. On the other, the families of aristocratic pretension, encouraged by this instability, harassed Florence with their perpetual feuds, intriguing and even fighting for that command which should bring the prize of a new oligarchy within their reach. Thus the State found its monumental expression in the San Marco of 1436; its walls ill founded and always threatening ruin, its upper storeys and roof the prey of fire that threatened to destroy the whole.

We have seen what Cosimo, with his vast resources, was able to accomplish in this Church and Convent, renewing both throughout. Yet note that this restoration was conservative. The site was unchanged, the walls in great part the same, prominent features nobly planned, such as the Nave windows and the façade of the Capitolo, were left untouched; one would have said nothing had been altered, till, on a nearer view, the real nature and magnitude of these works declared themselves. Six years of busy building and San Marco is Cosimo's creation indeed, justifying the enormous sums he spent here, and wearing proudly the crown of art for which he had contrived a place. So then with the State where he and his successors bore rule. When we examine, as is our purpose in this chapter, the form of the Florentine Government during the times of the earlier Medici, it seems at first as if nothing had been changed. The Signoria is here still, with Gonfaloniere and Priori complete; the Companies with their twelve Ensigns; the Ten of War and Eight of Peace are in their old places. For, indeed, Cosimo dealt with the city as he had done with San Marco, sparing the forms of State to which the people were attached, but spending freely to create, behind and under

these, a new power which should transcend them, and lift himself and his heirs to the supreme direction of affairs. What mattered it to the tyrant that Florence still seemed a Republic, when every vote was cast for the Medici, and every seat occupied by his adherents? And what cared the people if republican forms, which had never found a truly democratic basis, bent now the more easily to that tyrant's commanding will? Weary of vain strife, bought to acquiesce in peace at any price, Florence forsook the hard and narrow way of true political progress, content now to be ruled, and careless of that sovereign right to rule for which she had once so keenly contended.

It is a new Florence then, this city of the fifteenth century; new as the restored San Marco it encloses. And be the last word of this long-drawn comparison spoken when we have said that, as form and colour came to clothe these new walls at San Marco with grace unthought of before, so, on a grander, wider scale, a strange development of Art coincided with the drooping, dying political life of the day: it was the channel in which human energy of the finer sort, when debarred from public affairs, found room to move and means to express and distinguish itself. Lorenzo the Magnificent, his grandfather's worthy successor, especially asserted himself here; in the subtle policy which encouraged every safe manifestation of the popular life and interest. Let them write—wildly even—they will the less rebel; let them paint rather than plot, sing instead of striking. Natural taste fitted the Magnificent to be a Mæcenas, but policy kept him such, and the letters and art he fostered gave the last completeness to the State that Cosimo had known so well to found. Yet already the times are changed, and for the worse, and when, in 1494, Lorenzo's bier stands in the passage between Church and Convent, there is little of the Angelic left in Florence, even in her Art; just as the new Prior of San Marco, as indeed the Magnificent had found while he yet lived, was a very different character from the gentle Antonino, the friend of Cosimo as of every publican and sinner.

This new Prior was, of course, Savonarola, the Frate whose name and tragic history are now more intimately associated with

the Convent of San Marco than are even the liberality of Cosimo who founded the place, the art of Angelico who decorated it, or the gentle piety of Antonino who ruled it in peace. Another presence is dominant here, almost to the exclusion of the rest, in a dark thunder-cloud from which fall the hot, bright bolts of eloquent denunciation. *Gladius Domini cito et velociter*, he cries, and again, "Tell Lorenzo that, though I be but a stranger and he a citizen of Florence, yea the first, he shall remove while I abide." Not the public and terrible execution of 1498 availed to break the spell, and so real was the presence of Savonarola here, even after his death, that his enemies sent the very bell of San Marco into banishment beyond Arno lest it should speak in the name of the dead.[1]

No apology, then, is needed if we now close our study of this place by examining the changes introduced by Savonarola in the forms of Florentine Government.

The way for these was opened by the flight of Piero dei Medici from Florence in 1494. Savonarola, who had already preached the speedy judgment of God, and pointed to the French King as the Cyrus of a new return from captivity, rose in the stirring events of the day to the height of his popularity, and consequent power over the city. The reform of the popular Government now occupied his mind, and to secure it he bent all the powers of his persuasive and unrivalled eloquence. In these days the word of the Frate, about whom shone a mysterious halo of prophetic authority, was law in Florence, so that no long time passed ere what he wished was done, and with acclamation. Florence broke entirely with her past, looked no more even to Rome for her model, but adopted a form of Government *alla Veneziana*, borrowed from the sister community by the Adriatic shore.

The foundation of this new form lay in the Consiglio Maggiore, composed of all whose fathers, grandfathers, or great-grandfathers had sat in the three great Offices of State, or who, being of the age of twenty-nine, had themselves enjoyed the same honour. It was provided that when the number of such *beneficiati*, as they

[1] Decree of the Signoria, 29th June, 1498. The bell was carried to the Franciscan Church of San Salvatore, near San Miniato.

were called, exceeded fifteen hundred, the whole Council should be divided into three parts, each of which should govern in turn for six months. When these rules were applied to the actual situation as it presented itself in 1495, it was found that the number of duly qualified councillors was 3200, with the result that three successive councils of a thousand or more members ruled the city in turn for the next eighteen months, two-thirds of the membership being a quorum. The office of this council was to elect the Priori of the Signoria and other magistrates, and, as an innovation in a democratic direction, they were required every three years to choose sixty citizens without qualification, and twenty-four promising young men under the prescribed age, who should enter the Consiglio Grande in right of this election. They were further charged with the choice of eighty men of forty years old, to form, from six months to six months, a kind of subordinate assembly, intermediate between the privileged members of the Consiglio Grande and the mass of the citizens. In legislation, the point of departure lay in the Signoria, where one of the Priori, changed daily, was charged with the office of introducing bills. The approval of the Signoria, if obtained, was then tested in the Council of the Eighty, and, when the bill had passed that barrier also, it lay with the Consiglio Grande to say whether or not it should become a Law of the State. In favour of these new assemblies the ancient Councils of the Podestà (Commune), and Capitano (People), were naturally discontinued as an outworn organisation that had lost both meaning and use.

The spirit of the new Government was born with the cries of "Popolo" and "Libertà" raised at the departure of the weak-spirited Piero; it found its basis in the sentiment of Florence, passionately opposed as the city was to any renewal of the Medicean tyranny. This feeling spoke in the utterance of the eloquent preacher of the day. "The government of a single head," said Savonarola, "cannot be other than tyrannical, whereas what we need is a civil and popular rule. Woe to thee Florence, if thou create a head capable of overruling the rest, for from hence arise all the evils that lay cities waste. . . . Wherefore let thy

first law be this, that henceforth none may ever pretend to sole dominion over thee, lest thou be found to build thy Government on the sand." Such, then, was the fire from which issued the Form that Florence fell down to worship: the Government according to the Order of Venice, where no tyrant had been known to trouble the sea-girt State.

We have said the fire, and indeed in such moments of heated enthusiasm much may be accomplished which reflection, and the sober process of logic, can hardly approve. So it is with the shape assumed by Florence in 1495: one wonders that this people, once masters of the keenest political intelligence, should now have supposed their future safe; their own past history might have seemed more than enough to dissipate so vain a dream. For when the Tyranny now ended in universal execration first lifted the head of Cosimo above his fellows, it made its appearance behind and among the traditional forms of popular Government, and strengthened its fatal power without finding the least need to disturb them. The rule of Cosimo was, to a proverb, paternal; his vast resources made him easily master of the city, and the influence he exercised did its work through, rather than in spite of, the existing organisation of State. Votes were at his command, which he used to fill every public office with his creatures, and thus he controlled the whole. How then, we ask, could it be supposed that any new distribution of power, however subtly planned, could bring safety from the like insidious corruption? It was clearly beyond the wit of man to devise a system of Government incapable of becoming the obedient engine of a new tyranny on the appearance of one sufficiently ambitious, wealthy, and unscrupulous to tread again the path that the Medici had followed in their day.

When we examine, from this point of view, the provisions of 1495, we find, not without surprise, that they lack even the partial remedy which might have seemed fit to put such a danger out of the range of risks to be reckoned with. The great fault we have found in the ancient Government of Florence lay here, that being popular, even republican, it was yet not sufficiently democratic. Now, had advantage been taken of present opportunity, had the

city, willing as we have seen her to break altogether with the past, seen fit to introduce a system of universal suffrage, or anything approaching it, our judgment of the situation must have been very different. We repeat that no possible form of Government will, as such, exclude the approach of corruption and the possibility of tyranny. But it is clear that with a wide base, well laid in an extended electorate, the risks of corruption are minimised, and tyranny, if in spite of all it do appear, can only find footing because popular sentiment is overwhelmingly in its favour; in which case the rule of one man loses much of its tyrannical character to assume something like that of an elective monarchy. Yet, in spite of what seems so plain, the Signory of 1495, and even the Eighty themselves, were chosen, not by the citizens at large, but by a class—that of the *Benefiziati*—sitting as such in the Consiglio Grande. Thus this vaunted bulwark of Liberty, so considered, is seen as what it truly was, the mere affirmation and defence of class privilege in another form. The more passionate the Florentine desire for freedom appears, the more evident the decline of political acumen and ability among a people once famous for both, who now neglect their great opportunity, and, at the bidding of a traditional conservatism, content themselves by reaffirming the old electorate with all its restrictions under that new shape which they considered more promising.

Hitherto we have done no more than examine the new form of the State in itself, it is now time we looked a little at the way in which Florence came to adopt it. Paolo Soderini, Doctor of Laws, and for many years Florentine Ambassador at Venice, was the original advocate of the plan which proposed to introduce in his native city the Venetian style of Government. He carried with him the popular feeling, but found a powerful opponent in Guidantonio Vespucci, who pointed out the difference between the racial character of the two cities, insisting that the Venetian Council was an aristocratic assembly, and that the peace over which it had so long and happily presided was due chiefly to the easy temper of that populace who had made the lagoons their home. As the principal people in Florence felt with Vespucci, this proposal to

copy Venice was hotly debated between the two classes in the State, nor did it at first seem as if the question could be easily or speedily resolved.

It was in these circumstances then that Savonarola brought matters to a decision by throwing the weight of his immense influence on the side of Soderini's proposal. Preaching his thirteenth sermon on the Prophecy of Haggai, he used the following words: "The form most suitable for this city is that of a Consiglio Grande, according to the Venetian manner. Let the Companies of Florence each propose its own scheme; let the Gonfalonieri select from these the four that please them best; let the Signoria, after prayer, choose for us of these four the best of all. So may we believe it the will of God, as of the people; and I think it will prove to be the Venetian form, for, since they adopted this in Venice the unbroken peace there has declared such Government Divine." Thus he spoke in the beginning of December, and on the 22nd of the same month the Councils of the Commune and of the People passed the ordinance he had recommended. It is thus impossible to mistake the meaning of what then took place. The credit, such as it is, of the proposal belongs to Soderini; it arose naturally in the mind of one long an expert in Venetian affairs, and a sincere admirer of the Government to which he had been accredited. But that Florence came to acquiesce in it was due to Savonarola, who used to that end the unexampled influence of his spirit and word over all classes in the community.

Observe, then, the light thrown by this significant fact on the real situation in Florence. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of those who believed that the new Form would heal the wounds of the Florentine body-politic. On the other hand we see clearly how vain such a hope was, whatever shape the State might assume, and, examining the new Ordinance, we find it wanting in that very particular which alone might have done something to hinder the return of tyranny. That it passed at all shows the decline of political sense in those who hailed it with such high hopes. That the influence of Savonarola was the commanding cause of this change in the forms of State seems to show us how dependent

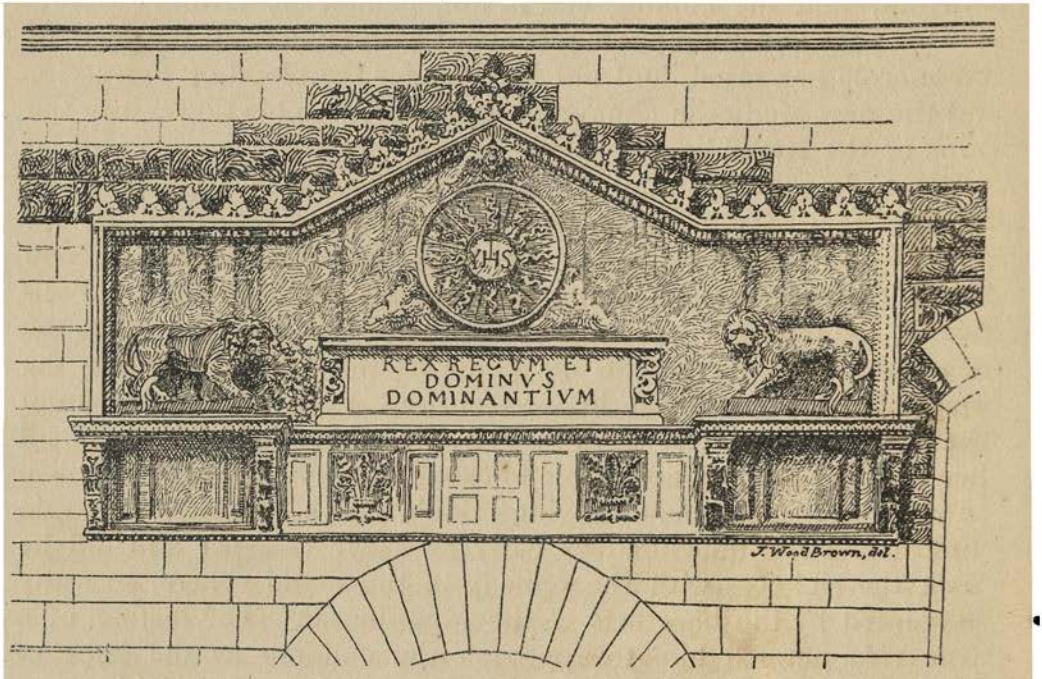
Florence had come at last to be, how conscious of weakness, how anxious to be led. The preacher may cry from his pulpit that the rule of one is ruin to the State; we believe him sincere, and, none the less, see in himself the very political factor he decried. This the long rule of the Medici had wrought, that if there was hope at all it lay in no revival of the true spirit of independence—that was dead—but in the character of him to whom the city now confided her destinies. Savonarola had opposed the Medici while they lived, he outlives them to undo as far as may be their work of political, and especially of moral corruption.

If we have rightly summed up and presented the situation, it is plain that the power of this Reformer, great as it was, rested on an uncertain foundation; that of his personal popularity with its consequent moral influence. How uncertain this basis was a few years were soon to prove. Savonarola had carried the ordinances of the new State proposed by Soderini, against the opposition of Vespucci and his party. He had thus made enemies in high places, and more, for his bold independence had offended the Court of Rome. Hence, then, a Papal policy for his suppression, which found eager supporters in Florence. Interdicts are let fly against him; some wandering memory of Settimo leads to the futile parody of that great scene in the Prova di Fuoco of 1498, prepared, but in vain, and proving nothing save that the prestige of the Prophet was a thing of the past. Thenceforward the sad history moved rapidly to its tragic close. San Marco was besieged, the Frate made prisoner, tortured, led out at last to the scaffold and its flames, amid the tears of his friends and the triumphant rage of his enemies. Rome had conquered; yet, spectators of this final scene, it is not so much the strength of Rome we wonder at as the weakness of Florence. Dependence can hardly be reckoned among the virtues of a State, but dependence may yet include a certain strength, admirable in its kind, if only the subject and the dependent be found faithful to what they have seen of righteousness and of truth in their leader. This, then, is the last, worst charge against the Florence of 1498, that, being dependent, she was also fickle, forsaking the man who had once been her chosen leader in

all things pure, honest, and of good report, her guide to the ways of peace. It is in vain, then, that the Councils still sit which Savonarola commended to the city, and worse than in vain that from these seats, in 1527, they elect Jesus Christ the King of their State. The wandering of mind we have noted has now become delirium, and the coming end is not, cannot be, far off. A few months pass and Florence is girt about with armies, till the death of Savonarola has cried, and not in vain, for the blood of Ferruccio, and the new Medicean conqueror has entered on his power over the ruins of the Republic.

We have moved, under the stress of so great an argument, too far from San Marco and its heroic Prior; let us return to sum up, in a few closing words, the essential merit of Savonarola, and hence deduce the substantial glory of his Convent-home. Politically, the reformer was mistaken in the importance he gave to the new form of Government, incapable as this was of securing the peace he desired. But he was entirely right in pointing from the first to the want of work in Florence as the material root of all her ills, and entirely admirable in using all his influence to establish in the city that *Monte,* or Savings Bank, which Fra Bernardino da Feltre had recommended as early as 1487. Deeper still did he seek the sickness with the remedy in the moral sphere, so sadly corrupted by the base arts of the Magnificent. The instinct of a true reformer led him to approach the children as the hope of coming years, and if we find something childish and trivial in these *Bands of Vigilance* and *Bonfires of Vanity,* this resulted not from any defect in the intention of the Frate, but rather from the weakness of the times and of the human material with which he worked. His failure here was *weird,* in the true sense of that much-abused word: heavy with the fate of a Republic that rejected his rule while adopting the forms of State he recommended. And even this last inconsistency was, in a sense, natural, for, beggared in her substance, her once busy craftsmen crying for bread, and broken in her spirit of civil independence, what was left Florence but fearful worship of futile forms of State, or, Savonarola done to death, what future save that which awaited her in the very tyranny she

had thought to escape for ever? Such are time's revenges, and such the dependence of the Form on that underlying Substance and quickening Spirit which inevitably determine alike its development and its decay.



LINTEL FROM PALAZZO VECCHIO

THE END

TERMINAL NOTE

TO the view of early days in Florence, given in the first paragraph of page 244, should be added the further facts, not insignificant, that the locality of the first Jewish quarter in the city is still marked by the very ancient Via dei Giudei in the Oltr' Arno, not far from Santa Felicità, and that this people, when settled in Italy under Augustus and Tiberius, used Greek in their funeral inscriptions—see those of Rome; it was, no doubt, the language in which much of their business was carried on. The whole thus suggests a high probability that some at least, if not the first, of the Florentine Christians were of this race. And the word *Greek*, wherever we have used it in this connection, must be held to cover, therefore, the whole Greek-speaking community of Florence, to whatever race its individual members may have belonged.

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